

**Governing the “Government Party”:
Liberal Party of Canada Leadership Conventions of 1948, 1958 and 1968**

by

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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
History

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2012

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is the true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

During the twentieth century, as Canadian voters began to associate the brand of their major political parties with the characteristics of their leaders, the Liberal Party of Canada's leadership races evolved into events of national importance. This study examines this transformation through the 1948, 1958 and 1968 leadership conventions. It incorporates perspectives from inside the Liberal Party as well as the Canadian media's portrayals of the conventions. This thesis explores the alternating pattern of anglophone and francophone Party leaders, the complications associated with the predictability of the outcome, the evolution of convention tactics to recruit delegate support, Party (dis)unity throughout the contests, and the political science theories that deconstruct the conventions and predict outcomes. It also details how, over time, the political ambitions of senior-ranking members trumped the interests the Liberal Party.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Whitney Lackenbauer, for expressing enthusiasm from the outset of this topic. He offered continuous encouragement and advice throughout this project. I will be forever grateful for his efforts to make me a better historian.

I was fortunate enough to be a part of the Tri-University Graduate Program in History and work closely with a number of excellent faculty members. Dr. Ryan Touhey of St. Jerome's University, the first person to encourage me to undertake graduate studies, has been ardently supportive. I thank him for sitting on my committee, discussing ideas, offering advice, as well as being blunt and honest in all his comments. I also thank Dr. Cynthia Comacchio of Wilfrid Laurier University for her hands on approach and technical feedback on my seminar papers. She is a straight-shooter and asks no more of her students than she is willing to give herself. Dr. Roger Sarty and Dr. Peter Farrugia, also of Wilfrid Laurier University, gave me an experience of a lifetime when I participated in a seminar and battlefields study tour of Canada's First and Second World Wars. Standing on the beaches of Dieppe and running the shores of Juno Beach will resonate with me for the rest of my life. Thanks also to Dr. John English and Dr. Geoffrey Hayes, both of the University of Waterloo, for sitting on my Thesis Committee.

A special thanks to Donna Lang for helping me navigate the technical hurdles of my degree and processing my large stream of scholarship applications in the History Department at the University of Waterloo. I also thank Malcolm and Karolyn Ferguson for putting me up in Ottawa multiple times when I couldn't afford a hotel room. Their friendship and acts of kindness will always be cherished.

I am grateful to the Liberal Party of Canada for access to their public sources in Library and Archives Canada. There were areas of this project I wished I could have included but was unable to complete due to a lack of archival sources. While initially I was granted unfettered access to all Liberal Party fonds, I was informed two weeks prior of my research trip of new criteria for said access. Unfortunately due to both restrictions on my time and a lack of monetary resources I was unable to accommodate this criteria.

A sincere thanks to my family for providing years of encouragement, guidance and committed support for all of my endeavors. My parents, Dave and Barbara, have always been there for me through life's ups and downs. They have instilled in me the drive to work hard and be better than I ever thought I could be. They are the best parents I could have asked for. My older brothers, Jeremie and Justin, have helped me all along the way. Jeremie has shown me that hard work can overcome any obstacle in our path. His love and affection for his wife, Sheri, and

his two children, Sydney and Cody, helped me grow up faster. In the simplest of terms, Justin was the first person to take me canvassing, teach me how to hammer in a lawn sign, and ask me to be apart of something bigger than myself in the 2004 General Election. It was at that time Canadian politics, and subsequently Canadian history, came alive. Justin always reinforced that I had to be my own person and find a direction of my own. He and his wife Christina helped me get my first political job, put me up in their living room, and have always been there to ask advice.

Last, but never least, I thank Theresa Mendler, my partner, teammate, confidant, muse and best friend. She has challenged me, stimulated my ideas, and become a crucial part of my life. She is relentlessly supportive of my academic pursuits and all the uncertainty that comes with them. She offers me advice and is there for the hard decisions. She endures my long days and late nights of work, and has made sacrifices to support me in my many hours of need. I am better with her by my side and look forward to our life spent together.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Liberal Party of Canada is the oldest political party in the country. The Party's origins stem from loose political factions in Upper and Lower Canada. The Clear Grits in Upper Canada had occasionally united with Parti rouge of Lower Canada in the legislature of the United Province of Canada. The perennial conflict between English and French factions made common ground difficult to find. Nevertheless, a united Liberal Party was created in 1861, combining the two groups in a formal alliance. The Party's struggles in trying to manage English and French interests remained. In the quarter century after Confederation, the Liberal Party served as the official opposition to John A. Macdonald's Conservative Party of Canada, apart from a brief Liberal interlude during Alexander Mackenzie's tenure as prime minister from 1874-78.

In 1887 the charismatic, Catholic, French Canadian Wilfrid Laurier was appointed leader of the Liberal Party and transformed it into a credible alternative option to Macdonald's Conservatives. Laurier capitalized on the Conservatives' alienation of Quebec and promoted trade reciprocity with the United States, which allowed the Liberals to gain a foothold in the Prairies. In 1896, he became Canada's first francophone prime minister in a watershed election. Laurier held Canada's highest office until 1911, balancing the competing, and sometimes aggressive, interests of English- and French-speaking Canada. Ultimately Laurier's Liberals were defeated in 1911 by an "unholy alliance" of French Canadian nationalists and Borden Conservatives who divided the country over the naval debate and reciprocity with the United

States to defeat the Liberals. Laurier continued to lead the party from the Opposition benches through the First World War, including the 1917 election when many of his English-speaking caucus members left the Liberals to run under the Union banner to invoke conscription for overseas service.

Laurier died in 1919 and a young William Lyon Mackenzie King was elected his successor at a Liberal Leadership Convention on the fifth ballot over William S. Fielding. King followed Laurier's 32 years as Liberal Party leader with 29 of his own, cementing a political legacy that no Liberal or Conservative would match. King built the Liberal Party's strength in Quebec, continually winning the province in general elections. King's nearly three decades as Liberal leader included twenty-two years as prime minister, making him the longest serving leader in Commonwealth history.¹ The Liberal Party had blossomed into "the government party,"² a seemingly unbeatable force in Canadian politics.

King's retirement in 1948 initiated a new chapter in the history of the Liberal Party. After almost six decades with Laurier and King as leader, the Liberals chose three leaders in the next twenty years. The Party's identity, and the unofficial factions that operated within it, changed as new faces and ideas emerged through three leadership campaigns. Before Louis St-Laurent, Lester Pearson, and Pierre Trudeau stood in front of the national electorate as the face of the Liberal brand, they first had to win over their peers: card-carrying Liberals. This study addresses how they came to assume the leadership of the Liberal Party, and how these leadership selection processes reflected the evolution of party culture after the Second World War.

¹ King served as Prime Minister from 29 December 1921 until 28 June 1926, 25 September 1926 until 6 August 1930, and 23 October 1935 until 14 November 1948.

² The phrase "the government party" was coined by Reginald Whitaker in *The Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada 1930-58*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

This study examines National Liberal Leadership Conventions and Canadian media observations thereof. Primary source materials including memoirs, private papers, campaign materials, Liberal Party documents, newspapers, magazines, and television broadcasts shed light on what transpired. Memoirs corroborate or refute media reports, providing personal recollections about colleagues' personal motivations and the leadership campaigns themselves. Archival materials from the personal papers of Liberal politicians and the Liberal Party of Canada include leadership campaign analyses, convention strategy, and both official and private correspondence. I have analyzed media coverage in the week leading up to and following the 1948, 1958 and 1968 conventions, including newspapers from every Canadian province and popular magazines.

Shifts among competing factions within the Liberal Party have become readily apparent in recent years through the exploits of Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, Stéphane Dion, Michael Ignatieff and Bob Rae. This thesis indicates that the Party's internecine squabbling over leadership is not new, but dates back to 1968. The National Liberal Leadership Conventions in 1948 and 1958 did not threaten the unity of the Liberal Party organization, and these leadership races nurtured the needs of the Liberal Party over the candidates themselves. Part and parcel with the Progressive Conservatives' unsuccessful opposition, the Liberals of 1948 and 1958 were developing a brand that was trusted by Canadians and an organization where politicians of various ideological bents worked together to achieve party goals. By 1968 the culture had changed. The race to replace Pearson was fought by a new generation of Liberals who lacked organizational experience and placed their personal aspirations ahead of party interests. This represented a fundamental transformation in party culture.

Alternance -- the theory that the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada must alternate between an Anglophone and Francophone -- is a fundamental component of Liberal Party history. The tradition began with Laurier and King and has persisted ever since. This study examines the impact of alternance at the Party's leadership conventions and explains how it emerged as unofficial doctrine of Liberal leadership. By 1968 alternance was firmly embraced by Liberals as criteria for Liberal leadership races. The long pattern of alternating that had occurred up until then, combined with the delicate political relationship between Quebec and the rest of Canada, brought this result.

Another symptom of culture change within the Liberal Party was weakening control exerted by the outgoing leader. Political scientist Reginald Whitaker asserts that "one of King's greatest concerns in his last few years was what he believed to be the declining political fortunes of the Liberal party and the failure of the party to maintain proper organization following the 1945 election victory."³ Under the weight of these concerns Mackenzie King decided to retire from Canadian political life in 1948. King believed Louis St Laurent was the Liberal Party's best hope for a revival in the postwar period, and the outgoing leader orchestrated a series of major endorsements from high-profile Liberals to hand St Laurent the reins with an overwhelming majority of support. These endorsements were not aimed at the critical voice of Charles Power, but to counteract the leadership campaign of Jimmy Gardiner who King considered the real threat to St Laurent. This maneuver was not just about picking a successor. King's efforts at the 1948 Convention were designed to ensure he left a well-organized Liberal Party in the trusted

³ Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 168.

hands of St Laurent. King succeeded, and St Laurent was elected with strong cabinet, caucus and delegate support.

At the 1958 Convention, St Laurent remained neutral when the Party faithful chose his successor. The main contenders for his position, Lester Pearson and Paul Martin, did not allow the contest to distract from their duties as critics, and their race reflected their loyalty to both leader and Party. The circumstances were profoundly different ten years later. Although Pearson remained officially neutral, it was public knowledge that the outgoing leader favoured Pierre Trudeau. The various contenders put the leadership race ahead of broader Party interests and brought the government within a motion away from a non-confidence defeat in the House of Commons in March 1968. Pearson's weak grasp on the Party machine was a stark contrast to King's power, influence and control twenty years earlier. The culture of the Party and the politicians who led it had changed, and this study highlights the significant transformation that occurred over the twenty year period.

Leadership Convention Theory

Leadership conventions emerged as the standard practice by which Canadian political parties selected a leader in the twentieth century. The convention process was first introduced by the Liberal Party in 1919 and adopted by the Conservative Party in 1927. Political scientist John Courtney describes how "Conventions with several hundred delegates drawn together from across the Dominion were regarded as being both more 'representative' of the party as a whole than the parliamentary caucus and more 'democratic' as a means for selecting party leaders in

1919 and 1928.”⁴ These conventions also helped political parties overcome regional imbalance and weaknesses in Parliament.⁵ Over time they became a fundamental component of Canadian politics,⁶ passing control over leader selection from the parliamentary group to the grassroots party members.⁷ Courtney adds that the significant growth in delegates for leadership conventions changed party organization, expanding the role of the extra-parliamentary members.⁸

Courtney argues that leadership conventions are built on representational and democratic principles: the more delegates at conventions, the more democratic and legitimate the process becomes.⁹ J. Lele, G.C. Perlin and Hugh Thorburn counter this assertion, arguing that convention delegates are unrepresentative of Canada’s population. Using the 1967 PC convention, 1968 Liberal convention and 1971 New Democratic Party convention as examples, they contend that the leadership conventions “were representative of the more privileged groups in Canadian society. They resembled neither the mass of Canadian society nor the respective party’s supporters in the 1968 general election.”¹⁰ Courtney and Lele, Perlin, and Thorburn are correct.

⁴ John C. Courtney, *The selection of national party leaders in Canada*, (Hamden: Archon Books, 1973), 78.

⁵ John C. Courtney, “The Morning After: Delegate Accountability,” *Parliamentary Government* 4, no. 2 (1983): 8; John C. Courtney, “Leadership Conventions and the Development of the National Political Community in Canada,” in *National Politics and Community in Canada*, eds. Kenneth R. Carty and W. Peter Ward (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986), 94.

⁶ Courtney, *The selection of national party leaders in Canada*, 82.

⁷ John W. Lederle, “National Party Conventions: Canada Shows the Way,” *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 25 (September 1944): 119.

⁸ Courtney, *The selection of national party leaders in Canada*, 78-79; Courtney, “The Morning After: Delegate Accountability,” 8.

⁹ John C. Courtney, *Do Conventions Matter?: Choosing National Party Leaders in Canada*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 129.

¹⁰ J. Lele, G.C. Perlin, and H.G. Thorburn, “The National Party Convention,” in *Party Politics in Canada*, ed. Hugh G. Thorburn, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1985), 89.

Lele, Perlin, and Thorburn's argument of a specific Convention delegate being unrepresentative of the general Party members and the general Canadian population are accurate. Those observations, however, do not render political leadership conventions as unrepresentative and undemocratic. Could that same argument be applied to the Canadian House of Commons? Courtney's position is far more conducive to the realities of Canada's political system.

Canadian leadership conventions can be broken down into early and modern periods. The early period consisted of conventions from 1919 to 1958. Courtney and Heather MacIvor characterize conventions during this era as small in size and dominated by the parliamentary caucus of the party.¹¹ The conventions from 1967 to 1990 were substantively different. MacIvor says the parliamentary wings of the parties had far less influence and the competitiveness of the races intensified in the election of delegates across the country and at the convention itself. This produced a greater degree of competition and unpredictability.¹² Courtney says that the races became more sophisticated. "To acquire the necessary professional help, to win candidate selection races, and to organize national campaigns, serious leadership contenders needed to raise and to spend vastly larger amounts of money than had ever before."¹³ Accordingly, after 1967, conventions grew to have more delegates, candidates, television coverage, public involvement and money.¹⁴

Donald V. Smiley says that the Canadian party convention has two fundamental rules:

"(a) voting is by secret individual ballot; (b) successive ballots are held at short intervals until

¹¹ Courtney, *Do Conventions Matter?*, 12; Heather MacIvor, "The Leadership Convention: An Institution Under Stress," in *Leaders and leadership in Canada*, eds. Maureen Maneuso, Richard G. Price and Ronald Wagenberg, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17.

¹² MacIvor, "The Leadership Convention: An Institution Under Stress," 17.

¹³ Courtney, *Do Conventions Matter?*, 30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

one candidate has a majority of all votes cast.”¹⁵ These two principles ensure that leadership selection reinforces the importance of relations between candidates and delegates, between delegates and provincial and other party leaders, and between candidates themselves.¹⁶ Smiley further dissects this process in his explanation of aspiring leaders’ strategies. He argues that a candidate’s first aim is to encourage individual delegates to support him and declare their support to influence uncommitted delegates.¹⁷ Second, he or she seeks to secure the tolerance of delegates pledged to other contenders to win in a multiple ballot convention. He explains the multi-ballot scenario:

If delegate X is committed openly to candidate Y, his support may be needed on the second ballot--or even more crucially, on the fifth--by candidates Y2, Y3, and Y4, when Y1 has been eliminated from the contest, either by the voting rules or his own voluntary withdrawal. Thus every delegate is in a sense “up for grabs” by every serious contender.¹⁸

The third relationship that Smiley says is necessary to win a leadership convention is the support of other leadership candidates. This process is difficult, however, as convention mythology favours “no deals” and candidates caught making them publicly elicit unfavourable publicity.¹⁹

Courtney’s contentions about the balloting process are purely theoretical. As the number of candidates seeking the leadership increases, so does the number of ballots to select the winner. Furthermore, Courtney says that it reasonable to anticipate that as the number of ballots increase, so does the opportunity for creating two competing coalitions.²⁰ A convention coalition is a

¹⁵ Donald V. Smiley, “The National Party Leadership Convention in Canada: A Preliminary Analysis,” in *Apex of Power: the prime minister and political leadership in Canada*, ed. Thomas A. Hockin, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1977), 112.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 112.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 113.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 114.

²⁰ Courtney, *Do Conventions Matter?*, 213.

“discrete, loosely knit aggregate of individual delegates temporarily united through their common electoral support of a candidate.”²¹ Courtney’s coalition theory “describes a collection of individual delegates who with possibly different preferred outcomes at the beginning of the voting nonetheless for at least one ballot support the same candidate in an attempt either to maximize what they want out of the election or to minimize what they do not want.”²² The theory of conflict of interest explains why certain coalitions stand a greater chance of being formed than others. All candidates and delegates differ from one another and no two are strictly alike. It is equally true, Courtney asserts, that some candidates and delegates have more in common with one another than with other candidates and delegates. Consequently, members who vote together do so because they share common attitudes and interests. Courtney theorizes that “potential coalitions of individuals with compatible goals and preferences based on private benefits and ideological, strategic, and personal considerations are more likely to form and to last than other potential coalitions with greater conflict of interest among their members.”²³

Although there is no sure way to predict coalition winners, Courtney’s theory asserts that “the candidate who gains the largest share of the votes from the first to the second ballot will become the eventual winner.”²⁴ Seven of the eight conventions in Canadian federal politics that have required three or more ballots confirm this pattern. Courtney’s alternative hypothesis, that “the candidate who leads on the first ballot eventually wins on the final one,” occurs in eleven of

²¹ Ibid, 215.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 216.

²⁴ Ibid, 231.

thirteen conventions lasting two or more ballots.²⁵ These theoretical perspectives support the historical evidence and analysis of the 1948, 1958 and 1968 Liberal Leadership Conventions.

Much of the theory concerning Canadian leadership conventions concerns a contest with multiple contenders and multiple ballots. Consequently the theories proposed by Courtney, MacIvor, and Smiley resonate with only the 1968 Liberal Leadership Convention. Courtney's assertion that as the number of candidates increases, so too will the number of ballots, holds true, as it does with the 1948 and 1958 Conventions with three candidates in each contest resulted in a first ballot decision. Furthermore, Courtney's point stands that as the number of ballots increases so does the number of opportunities to form competing coalitions. In 1968 Paul Hellyer, Robert Winters and John Turner had multiple opportunities to create a coalition to defeat Trudeau but refused to do so. As Smiley explained, the relationship between Trudeau and his opponents that ultimately supported, or opposed him, also became an important factor. When Sharp, Greene, and MacEachen moved to support Trudeau, their delegates had an important influence on the outcome. If a strong relationship had existed between Turner, Hellyer, and Winters, a coalition to defeat Trudeau might have succeeded. Finally, Courtney's point that the winner on the first ballot ultimately wins the convention is proven in the case of Trudeau.²⁶

The evidence from these three case studies disproves other proposed leadership convention theory. The 1968 convention, for example, did not support Courtney's assertion that the candidate who gains the largest percentage of vote increase on the second ballot ultimately wins the convention. Winters 31 per cent increase compared to Trudeau's 26, Hellyer's 24, and

²⁵ Ibid, 231-232.

²⁶ It should be noted that Dalton McGuinty's victory in 1996 and Stephane Dion's victory in 2006 both break with Courtney's model.

Turner's 12 did not yield a victory in the end. Had Winters been able to court Turner to his side, the convention might have produced a different party leader.

This study does not pin point the Liberal Party's leadership problems in 2012 on the events that took place at the 1968 Convention. Instead this research identifies some of the cultural transformations that occurred in the Liberal Party over the 30 year period of 1948 to 1968. The way Liberal Party leadership was viewed in 1968 is a primary outcome of this study.

I have been an actively involved in the Liberal Party of Canada and the Ontario Liberal Party since 2004. My involvement includes working on many election campaigns, in constituency offices, and both ministers' offices and Caucus Services at Queen's Park. Nonetheless, my active role in politics does not preclude me from being firm in my analysis and sincere in my conclusions. My roles as a Liberal and historian have led me to set party unity as a primary criteria to measure success. After all, the effectiveness of a political party during elections and in government depends on its ability to run an efficient and strong organization.

As the party transitioned from the long-tenured political leaderships of Laurier and King to the short-tenured leaderships of St Laurent and Pearson, the organizational culture of the Liberal Party changed. After the resignation of Pearson, the personal brands of Trudeau, Hellyer, Winters, Turner and Martin clashed in a leadership contest that split the party. Their campaigns were divisive and began years of difficult leadership questions within the party that persist today.

CHAPTER TWO
THE GENTLEMEN’S GAME: WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING AND THE 1948
NATIONAL LIBERAL LEADERSHIP CONVENTION

When we remember what has happened in the last half century, in the twelve general elections that have occurred, I think we are entitled to feel that our policies are an expression of the true and firm aspirations and ideals of the Canadian people. We have, in the results of those elections, evidence that the Liberal Party is a truly Canadian party.

Louis St. Laurent, Coliseum, Ottawa, 7 August 1948.

On 7 August 1948, Louis St Laurent spoke to the delegates of the National Liberal Leadership Convention at the Coliseum in Ottawa about the foundations of their party. “We must not forget that we who are here today represent the vast majority of the Canadian people,” he proclaimed. “We represent the Liberal Party and the Liberal Party has at almost all times represented the majority of the Canadian people.”²⁷ St Laurent and his colleagues believed that the party had become the defining force in the development of Canada and in the lives of Canadians. Liberals from the top of the organization down to its grassroots members shared the idea, and ideal, of a Liberal Canada.

The Liberal Party was entering a new age in 1948. Liberal leader and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, who had become a fixture in both government and the Party, declared that he would retire. The race for succession as leader and prime minister was between

²⁷ St. Laurent, “1948 National Liberal Convention Speech,” Delegates address, National Liberal Convention, Coliseum, Ottawa Ontario, August 7 1948.

three men: Louis St Laurent, 66;²⁸ Jimmy Gardiner, 65;²⁹ and Charles Power, 60.³⁰ In the end, St Laurent (supported by the outgoing prime minister) won on the first ballot with 848 votes over Gardiner's 323 and Power's 56.³¹

The historiography of the 1948 National Liberal Leadership Convention is sparse. The most thorough discussion is in Reginald Whitaker's *The Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada 1930-1958*, but biographies of St. Laurent, Gardiner, C.D. Howe, and Brooke Claxton also provide important insights into what transpired. "Certainly, throughout his long career as party leader King never gave the slightest indication that he harboured any belief in intra-party democracy," Whitaker argues, "especially when the definition of party was extended beyond the cabinet and the parliamentary caucus."³² According to this political scientist, the veteran Prime Minister was firmly opposed to national conventions, despite having been chosen as leader at one in 1919.³³ King's dislike for these gatherings verified his desire to maintain a firm grasp on the affairs of the Liberal Party and government policy.³⁴ David Bercuson in his biography of Brooke Claxton, and Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond and John English in their book *Canada Since 1945*, echo this view.³⁵ Although King was in the

²⁸ Member of Parliament for Quebec-East and Minister of External Affairs

²⁹ Member of Parliament for Melville and Minister of Agriculture

³⁰ Member of Parliament for Quebec South and former Cabinet Minister during the Second World War

³¹ James Gordon Fogo, "Leadership Results," Announcement, National Liberal Convention, Coliseum, Ottawa Ontario, August 7 1948.

³² Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 171.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ David J. Bercuson, *True Patriot: The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1898-1960*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 199; Robert Bothwell, Drummond Ian, English John, *Canada Since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 77.

twilight of his political career, his control remained unshaken throughout the August 1948 Convention. Whitaker points out that King wanted to go over all resolutions from the resolution subcommittee to ensure the Liberal Party remained consistent with the government's policies.³⁶ Furthermore, Whitaker ascertains that when Jimmy Gardiner began to discuss his own platform for government policy, King decided to deliberately assist St Laurent in his leadership bid.³⁷ Historiographical consensus holds that Mackenzie King approached the 1948 National Liberal Leadership Convention with the same steady hand that he used to govern the country. The veteran Prime Minister never relinquished control over the Liberal Party's political fortunes, and he would ensure that his final swan song would end in perfect tune. This chapter challenges Whitaker's view that King's motive was to ensure a St Laurent victory, arguing that King's primary motive was to ensure the unity of the Liberal Party through a French Canadian successor. St Laurent was the choice of King and senior members of caucus.

When the party's cautious, perennial leader finally decided to step aside in 1948, the younger members of the Liberal caucus, such as Brooke Claxton and Douglas Abbott, were relieved.³⁸ Nevertheless, King's retirement brought uncertainties, and Claxton expressed concerns to King that the succession was unsettling Liberals across the country.³⁹ The 1948 National Liberal Leadership Convention would be a milestone in Liberal Party politics: a new hand would steer the organization that Laurier and King built over more than a half century.

³⁶ Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 174.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Patrick H. Brennan, *Reporting the Nation's Business: Press-Government Relations during the Liberal Years, 1935-1957*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 146.

³⁹ Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 210.

The 1948 National Liberal Leadership Convention offered the prospect of party rejuvenation at a time of tremendous political uncertainty. Factions tested party unity as they competed for voice, control, and personal interest. Younger members of the Liberal Party believed in a fresh direction. Nevertheless, Liberals left the Convention stronger than when they arrived. The historiography observes that delegates felt frustration following the convention, but a fresh appraisal of the evidence suggests the opposite view: that the leadership selection process left Liberals reassured that the Party's political future was in steady, capable hands. Despite all the political maneuvering, Liberals wanted St Laurent.

This chapter explores several themes. First it considers the impact of Jeanne St Laurent, the wife of Louis St Laurent, on the leadership race. The Canadian media was fascinated with the photogenic Mrs. St Laurent, over her sacrifice for the good of the country, and the allure of finally having a First Lady. Second, the chapter discusses the Young Liberals' frustrations at the Convention. Youth delegates arrived in Ottawa with high expectations, but left disappointed - a sentiment publicized in the Canadian media. This chapter also examines the leadership candidacy of Paul Martin. It considers Martin's groundswell of support at the grassroots level, and the factors affecting his decision to withdraw from the leadership race. Finally, Mackenzie King's intervention in the race is considered in detail, emphasizing how the outgoing prime minister's typical obfuscation helped blur the lines between opposing factions and maintain Party unity.

A Grand Convention: Procedures, Rules and Format

Mackenzie King informed the National Liberal Federation in January 1948 that he intended to resign and he called for a leadership convention to select his successor.⁴⁰ On 19 March 1948 the Executive Committee of the Liberal Party issued *The Call for a National Convention of the Liberal Party*: “(1) to consider the platform of the Liberal Party of Canada; (2) to consider the question of Party organization; (3) to consider the question of Party leadership.”⁴¹ In August 1948, Liberals from across Canada descended upon Ottawa, representing all 255 electoral riding associations. Delegates were selected locally. Liberal delegates submitted policy resolutions to the Resolutions Committee, and elected a new party leader and prime minister.

The new Coliseum in Ottawa was fitted with dining halls, cocktail lounges and seats for 1,300 delegates and alternates on the floor with plenty of standing room. It was also equipped with a press room holding over 100 rowed tables carrying type writers. On the backdrop of the main convention stage were larger than life pictures of Prime Ministers Wilfrid Laurier and William Lyon Mackenzie King. The stage walls were decorated with red, white and blue bunting and a sign featuring the Liberal slogan: “Security. Unity. Freedom.”⁴²

Convention delegates held various positions within the Liberal Party. They included MPs and Senators, in addition to candidates from both previous and future elections; the nine provincial Liberal Party leaders; Liberal Party executives; the National Federation of Liberal Women; the Young Liberal Federation, together with their provincial counterparts, and three officers from each Liberal club at post-secondary institutions; and three delegates from each

⁴⁰ J.L. Granatstein, *Mackenzie King: His Life and World*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), 193.

⁴¹ *Call For a National Convention of the Liberal Party*, National Liberal Federation of Canada, 19 March 1948.

⁴² James Dyer, “Grit Convention Hall Like Football Field,” *Vancouver Sun*, 5 August 1948.

electoral constituency chosen at local annual general meetings.⁴³ In total there were 1,302 delegates at the convention,⁴⁴ usually hand selected by the local Party power brokers in each riding.⁴⁵

The rules for electing the Party leader at the 1948 convention would, for the most part, remain the same at subsequent Liberal conventions. The election was conducted by secret ballot. Only nominated candidates could stand for the Liberal Party leadership at the opening of the convention.⁴⁶ Each of the candidates could withdraw until the chairmen announced the taking of a ballot or they would officially stand.⁴⁷ Each ballot was counted by two returning officers selected from the delegates.⁴⁸ The balloting continued until a candidate received the majority of the total votes cast.⁴⁹ In the case of the 1948 convention, the winner had to receive 652 votes or more. Louis St Laurent's 848 votes on the first ballot put him well over that threshold against his opponents.

Mackenzie King and the Leadership Candidates: Powers, Gardiner and St Laurent

As Mackenzie King prepared to depart politics, leaving a solid legacy by 1948, historian Dale Thomson says that King's preference was for St Laurent, a hardworking francophone, to

⁴³ National Liberal Federation of Canada, *Report of the Proceedings of the National Liberal Convention*, (Ottawa: National Liberal Federation of Canada, 1948), 25.

⁴⁴ 307 delegates from the Federal Caucus, 140 from the Provincial Legislatures, 120 from other Liberal organizations, and 735 from electoral constituencies. In addition, there were a total of 843 alternate delegates; *Ibid.* In the event that an alternate was required, an application for substitution was made to the General Secretaries; *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁵ Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 172.

⁴⁶ National Liberal Federation of Canada, *Report of the Proceedings of the National Liberal Convention* (1948), 65.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

succeed him as leader. “St. Laurent remained his clear personal choice as the next Liberal leader,” Thomson asserted, “both on the basis of personal qualification and because he felt it would be poetic justice to hand back to a French-speaking Canadian the mantle he had inherited from Sir Wilfrid Laurier.”⁵⁰ Historians Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn note that “nothing in his political life was ever left to chance, and he was determined that this, the last act, should proceed exactly as ordained.”⁵¹ As the convention drew closer, King grew firmer in his determination to have St Laurent as his successor, convinced that Liberals needed to select St Laurent with an overwhelming majority to sustain unity. There could be no leadership squabbles or public division within the Liberal ranks. This reasoning dictated that King could not let the campaign play out on its own.

Charles Power was a not a serious contender for the leadership in 1948. Bothwell and Kilbourn, Whitaker and Thomson take this position.⁵² Nevertheless, Power’s unorthodox positions stemmed from a desire for parliamentary reform. Power ran for the leadership because he wanted to speak to Liberals about his views on Liberalism:

I never had anything like a glimmer of hope that I would be successful...This was the time, when Liberals of all shades and degrees were assembled, to set forth my views, and if anyone wanted to vote for them, and for what I considered to be the true precepts of Liberalism, then I would give him an opportunity.⁵³

Power thought Liberalism represented democratic values that protect people individually and collectively.⁵⁴ The *Globe and Mail* reported that Power stood in support of reforming the Liberal

⁵⁰Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 205.

⁵¹ Bothwell and Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: a Biography*, 222.

⁵² Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: a Biography*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 221; Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 176; Dale C. Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967), 236.

⁵³ Charles Power, *A Party Politician*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966), 396.

⁵⁴ Charles Power, *Coliseum*, Ottawa, August 7 1948.

Party and putting an end to the party's reliance on the civil service.⁵⁵ The bureaucratic nature of the party stood in the way of true democracy in the House of Commons, the MP for Quebec South alleged, and he challenged the use of "order-in-councils" allowing Cabinet to function without parliamentary debate. King confessed in his diary that he approved of these ideas. "Power stayed in to give emphasis to what he wanted to say about Liberal principles," he noted. "I confess I approved very strongly of most of what Power said. I thought he made a remarkably good presentation."⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Power's rogue standing in the party excluded him from being a serious threat to the other leadership contenders. Although prominent in Quebec, Power sat outside the party order. He won the 1945 General Election as an Independent but subsequently rejoined the Liberal Party.

Jimmy Gardiner was a skilled Liberal politician from Saskatchewan. A former provincial premier, Gardiner knew how to campaign and approached the 1948 Liberal convention determined to win. Gardiner's success as Minister of Agriculture had garnered support in rural ridings across the country, cementing a formidable base outside his home province, and he promised to end the strict and controlled budgets of Minister of Finance Douglas Abbott.⁵⁷

Gardiner's leadership ambitions contrasted with his opponents. In their biography of Jimmy Gardiner, Norman Ward and David Smith suggest that King thought Gardiner possessed an unwelcoming level of ambition to be leader. "Mackenzie King said ambition drove Gardiner to seek the Liberal party leadership in 1948," they concluded: "ambition so overwhelming,

⁵⁵ Warren Baldwin, "Return to Liberalism Power's Cry in Joining Party Leadership Race," *Globe and Mail*, 2 August 1948, 1.

⁵⁶ Mackenzie King Diaries, 7 August 1948, 2.

⁵⁷ Robert Taylor, "See Austerity Budgets of Abbott Ended If Jimmy Gardiner Wins," *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 August 1948, 15.

complained the prime minister, that Gardiner actually ‘work[ed] to secure the position...for himself.’⁵⁸ Thomson echoed this view.⁵⁹ In his diary, King credits Gardiner’s campaign tactics as the primary reason he intervened in the leadership campaign.⁶⁰ The *Toronto Daily Star* reported the Prime Minister’s support for St Laurent on the day of voting.⁶¹ Gardiner’s aggressive campaigning angered the prime minister, who detailed his plan of action in his diary:

I felt so disturbed over what I have learned of Gardiner’s tactics in seeking to win the Convention by all kinds of machine methods that I decided I would phone to one or two of my colleagues and make suggestions to them which I have felt to be necessary and in the interests of the party and the country. I got Howe first; suggested to him that he should allow himself to be nominated, and then before the voting, announced that he was withdrawing. That everyone knew he was supporting St. Laurent and would not wish to take away a vote from him. He was very pleased that I had spoken to him. Said he would gladly do that. Was terribly put out by what Gardiner had been doing.⁶²

Mackenzie King documented similar conversations with Abbott, Paul Martin, Stuart Garson, Brooke Claxton, and Lionel Chevrier.⁶³ The plan was a well-thought out public relations maneuver. King instructed Canada’s most popular Liberals to withdraw their nominations to stand as candidates and support St Laurent at the last moment. Liberal delegates at the convention would then see that members of Cabinet, who knew St Laurent and Gardiner best, stood behind St Laurent. The ploy worked. The *Vancouver Sun* described how “a high-powered cabinet ‘machine’ backing External Affairs Minister Louis St. Laurent for leader had pretty well cleared the field of ‘dark horses’ as the National Liberal Convention opened today.”⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Norman Ward and David Smith, *Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 293.

⁵⁹ Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 236.

⁶⁰ Mackenzie King Diaries, 5 August 1948, 1.

⁶¹ *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 August 1948, 3.

⁶² Mackenzie King Diaries, 5 August 1948, 1.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 1-5.; Mackenzie King Diaries, 5 August 1948, 5.

⁶⁴ Vancouver Sun Ottawa Bureau, “Wismer Supports ‘Machine’ Choice,” *Vancouver Sun*, 5 August 1948.

Clarence Decatur Howe was a cornerstone of the Liberal Party and an important ally of Mackenzie King. Howe used his influence in caucus and over the Ontario Provincial Liberals to promote St Laurent's candidacy. Bothwell and Kilbourn note that each of the Ontario Ministers owed Howe for their portfolios because he recommended them to King.⁶⁵ Indeed, by April 1948 the Manitoba MP Ralph Maybank observed that Howe was effectively St Laurent's campaign manager.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Howe said publicly that he would retire if anyone became leader other than St Laurent. The *Financial Post* reported, "Mr. Howe wields considerable influence in the counsels of the party. The fact that he will throw his weight behind Mr St. Laurent is important. Also important, is the implication that he will remain only if Mr. St. Laurent is the leader."⁶⁷

Although Garson, Abbot and Claxton all approached Mackenzie King during the convention and expressed second-thoughts of the plan, King ignored them. The convention unfolded as he had predicted in his diary. King left nothing to chance. Other delegates suspected of supporting Gardiner received notice to fall in line with the Prime Minister's plan.⁶⁸ Indeed, King eventually withdrew his neutrality and publicly voted for St Laurent at the convention ballot box.⁶⁹

King thought St Laurent the best Liberal to continue to lead the Party. This decision was part in parcel with King's devoted life service to the Liberal Party and to Canada. In his diary, King recounted his support for St Laurent:

⁶⁵ Bothwell and Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: a Biography*, 221.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 222.

⁶⁷ "Who's In the Field to lead Liberals?," *Financial Post*, 3 August 1948, page 1.

⁶⁸ Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 236.

⁶⁹ Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 178.

When we stopped, the first person I met which I was delighted to meet - was Mr. St. Laurent. He was wearing a great suit, like myself. I shook hands with him. Said I was pleased that the person with whom I shook hands, should be my successor.⁷⁰

The Liberal caucus and reporters were well aware of King's preference by August 1948.

Louis St Laurent was a reluctant candidate who initially showed little desire to be Liberal Party leader or prime minister. Thomson says that Mackenzie King presented his detailed plan to St Laurent, explaining that he should retire and the Minister of External Affairs should succeed him as chief. "Surprised to see how far the schedule had been established in Mackenzie King's mind," Thomson suggests, "St. Laurent stiffened in his resistance and declared that he could not, on any account, think of taking on the office."⁷¹ Pressure mounted as Howe and Paul Martin pleaded with St Laurent to take the job.⁷² Eventually, a group of wealthy Canadians allayed St Laurent's final reservations. Thomson noted:

Without consulting him, a group of wealthy admirers had joined together to wipe out his pre-war losses, and to strengthen his financial position in a way that left him under no obligation whatsoever towards the donors; he was asked to accept the arrangement on behalf of Canada, and as a contribution towards enabling him to continue to serve his country.⁷³

A reluctant St Laurent finally agreed to have his name stand at the leadership convention, steering the life of his family and himself in a new direction.

Finally... A First Lady!

⁷⁰ Mackenzie King Diaries, 5 August 1948, 2.

⁷¹ Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 212.

⁷² Former MP for Port Arthur; Former Minister of Railways and Canals, Minister of Marine, Minister of Munitions and Supply, Minister of Reconstruction, and Minister of Trade and Commerce; Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 215.

⁷³ Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 216.

“Her eyes brimmed, her gloved hand went up to her lips, and she smiled uncertainly, a little dazedly,” journalist Jack Karr of the *Toronto Daily Star* wrote. “In that exciting moment, she and the rest of the country knew that she would be the First Lady.”⁷⁴ The moment her husband won the leadership, Jeanne St Laurent became Canada’s First Lady in-waiting. An examination of Canadian newspapers in early August demonstrates the reverence the Canadian media had for Mrs. St Laurent. The wife of “Uncle Louis,” as St Laurent would later be called, was hailed for the personal sacrifices she and her husband made for their country during the Second World War. Mrs. St Laurent’s elegant smile, respectable and sophisticated fashion sense, and her love and affection for her children and husband featured prominently in press coverage across Canada.

All across Canada newspapers applauded the personal sacrifice of Mrs. St Laurent in allowing her husband to serve wartime Canada. In 1941, King’s Quebec Lieutenant Ernest Lapointe had passed away and left a large hole in the Liberal government. King recruited St Laurent to fill that role. The St Laurents picked up and moved their lives from Quebec into the nation’s capital. On 3 August 1948, the *Toronto Daily Star* noted the significant pay cut that St Laurent incurred by transitioning from one of Quebec’s top four lawyers to Parliament. Moreover, the Toronto paper detailed the difficult decision Mrs. St Laurent had in leaving behind her family in Quebec. The caption for a large and prominently placed photo of Mrs. St Laurent captured the difficulty of the decision: “WHEN HER HUSBAND was called into politics, and to

⁷⁴ Jack Karr, “Forget About Politics That Was ‘My Advice’ Says Mme. St. Laurent,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 August 1948, 3.

Ottawa in 1941, Mrs. St. Laurent accompanied him despite her reluctance to leave her home, family and grandchildren.⁷⁵

A glimpse at newspapers leading up to the Convention shows a range of photos of Mrs. St Laurent and her family. Photos of Jeanne appeared prominently in the *Toronto Daily Star*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Globe and Mail*,⁷⁶ and even smaller regional papers such as the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*. The *Montreal Star* noted that the St Laurent family lured photographers:

Cameramen were unanimous that the St. Laurent family is the most photogenic of the notables present at the convention. Good-naturedly Mrs. Louis St. Laurent and her three daughters, Mrs. Mathieu Samson, Mrs. G. F. Lafferty and Mrs. Hugh O'Donnell posed for countless shots for photographers from all over the Dominion.⁷⁷

Convention reporters adored Mrs. St Laurent. The *Winnipeg Free Press* wrote about her instant media success, proclaiming that “the three-score reporters and photographers who trailed them from the moment he [Louis St Laurent] became party leader decided she’s terrific.”⁷⁸ The reporters anticipated that Mrs. St Laurent was going to be a great asset to Canada’s highest political office.⁷⁹ In the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, the next First Lady stood in the middle of a photograph between her husband and King.⁸⁰ Only a couple of days after the convention closed,

⁷⁵ At the time an M.P. and Cabinet Minister would make a combined annual income of \$10,000; Robert Taylor, “Grandchildren Get Spare Time of St. Laurent,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 August 1948, 15.

⁷⁶ *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 August 1948, 15.; *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 August 1948, 3.; *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 August 1948, 1.; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 August 1948, 1.; *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 August 1948, 3.; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 August 1948, 10.; *Globe and Mail*, 7 August 1948, 3.

⁷⁷ Ethel Tiffin, “No Glamor In Politics,” *Montreal Star*, 7 August 1948, 6.

⁷⁸ CP, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 August 1948, 10; and CP, *Globe and Mail*, 9 August 1948, 14

⁷⁹ CP, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 August 1948, 10; and CP, *Globe and Mail*, 9 August 1948, 14

⁸⁰ “Congratulations--Prime Minister King is shown congratulating External Affairs Minister St. Laurent, his successor as head of the Liberal Party. Mrs. St. Laurent looks on as the two exchange handclasps.” (*Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 9 August 1948.)

the *Winnipeg Free Press* presented a small biography and backgrounder on the wife of the new Liberal leader. The article commented on the high quality of her English language skills, her childhood, her social life and how she had met her husband.⁸¹

By contrast, the Canadian media showed little endearment for Mrs. Gardiner or Mrs. Power.⁸² This coverage demonstrates the interest in a St Laurent leadership expanded far beyond the inner circles of the Liberal Party. The media demonstrated significant interest in examining St Laurent's life far more closely than his opponents. This media presence indicates a clear preference exercised by journalists and newspaper editors. The *Globe and Mail* provided the most in-depth coverage of these candidates' wives, with comments about Mrs. Gardiner restricted to her physical appearance and her likable personality.⁸³ Similarly, the article focused on the physical appearance of Mrs. Power and her prevailing family interests.⁸⁴ The image of Mrs St Laurent was far more thorough and popular, confirming the media's unflinching confidence that she and her husband were well suited to lead the country.

Youth in Revolt: The Young Liberal Federation in Convention

The Young Liberal Federation and the University Liberal clubs were among the most progressive Liberal delegates at the 1948 convention, sending a combined total of 81 delegates.⁸⁵

⁸¹ John S. Connolley, "New Honor As Leader's Wife Leads To House Hunting Job," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 August 1948, 10.

⁸² In the *Montreal Star*, the coverage given to Mrs. St Laurent and Mrs. Gardiner was held to short comments in two editions. Even so, aside from the photogenic qualities of the St Laurent's mentioned above, the other comments on both women were restricted to their inability to vote for their husbands and their disinterest in commenting on the campaign. Additionally, the article referred to both Liberal women as self-proclaimed housewives. (Ethel Tiffin, "Women Alert and Eager At Liberal Convention," *Montreal Star*, 5 August 1948, 12.)

⁸³ Ferguson, "Leadership Contenders All Have Charming Wives," *Globe and Mail*, 7 August 1948, 10.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 173. The Young Liberals sent 27 delegates and the University Liberals 54.

Although they represented little more than six percent of the delegates, Liberal youth played a significance role in shaping discussions around party rejuvenation.

On 4 August 1948, William Lyon Mackenzie King found a crowd of Canadian University students with banners cheering at his front door at Laurier House. When the Prime Minister stepped outside, the students broke out in a chorus of “He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.” After a few moments, King thanked the students for coming to honour his service. He recorded in his diary:

Spoke of the pleasure it was to me to have this greeting on the eve of the opening of the Convention; of the happiness that I knew it would have given to Sir Wilfrid and Lady Laurier to know of this greeting, and of their remembrance of a great leader whose footsteps I had sought to follow. I then spoke of the words: Unity, Security and Freedom...⁸⁶

The next day, newspapers across the country reported the visit. In the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the story “Prime Minister Serenaded” received front page coverage, outlining how 1,000 students marched from the University of Ottawa to King’s house in a parade, chanting “We want Willie!” and “three cheers for Mackenzie King.”⁸⁷ The *Montreal Star* claimed that a more modest crowd of 100 students stood outside King’s house to pay tribute, with a page two headline titled, “University Students Pay Tribute to Premier.”⁸⁸ Similar to the *Winnipeg Free Press* report, the *Globe and Mail* reported that 1,000 students came to see the Prime Minister.⁸⁹ *Le Devoir* also covered the story, but did not report the number of students.⁹⁰ It would be one of the last moments Young Liberals appeared united with the rest of the Party.

⁸⁶ Mackenzie King Diaries, 4 August 1948, 4.

⁸⁷ “Prime Minister Serenaded,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 5 August 1948, 1.

⁸⁸ “University Students Pay Tribute to Premier,” *Montreal Star*, 5 August 1948, 2.

⁸⁹ “‘We Want Willy,’ Students Yell Mr. King Appears on Doorstep,” *Globe and Mail*, 5 August 1948, 13.

⁹⁰ “Un hommage au premier ministre,” *Le Devoir*, 5 August 1948.

The convention was the Young Liberals' first experience drafting policy. According to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, most of the youth delegates considered policy questions far more important than the leadership race itself.⁹¹ Indeed, they arrived in Ottawa a day early for a gathering of their own,⁹² offering recommendations on nearly every contentious political issue of the time.⁹³ Their proposals included a change to the British North America Act that would allow the Dominion of Canada to change its constitution independently of Great Britain.⁹⁴ Moreover, they recommended that the provincial governments appoint two-thirds of the Senate, and that the Senate's property and citizenship requirements be removed.⁹⁵ Furthermore, they called on Canada to adopt a Canadian flag that did not incorporate either French or English cultural identity.⁹⁶

The Young Liberals tabled policy resolutions that the rest of the Party was not ready to accept whilst opposing resolutions proposed by older Liberals. The *Toronto Daily Star* reported that the Young Liberals rallied to defeat a resolution concerning employment and a higher

⁹¹ "Young Liberals Watch Policy," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 August 1948, 4.

⁹² "Young Liberals Meet," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2 August 1948, 7; Evelyn S. Tufts, "Old Guard and Young of Liberal Party Gather in Ottawa for Big Time," *Chronicle Herald*, 4 August 1948.

⁹³ Robert Nielsen, "Young Liberals From Universities Propose 15-Point Magna Carta," *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 August 1948, 15.

⁹⁴ "Student Liberals Seek Changes In BNA Act," *Globe and Mail*, 5 August 1948, 2.; Nielsen, "Young Liberals From Universities Propose 15-Point Magna Carta," *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 August 1948, 15.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ "Automatic retirement of senators at the age of 75, and the abolition of property and citizenship requirements for Senate membership. Immediate Abolition of appeals to the privy council. Canadian citizenship should be awarded without regard to race, color or creed, with special reference to Canadian Indians. An end to all government discrimination against Canadians of Japanese origin...Immediate establishment of an 'integrated' anti-inflammatory program including price, wage, credit and investment controls and rationing of individual commodities where necessary.' Redistribution of seats should be left to the chief electoral officer, not members of parliament to eliminate gerrymandering of constituency boundaries. Firm opposition to coalition between the Liberals and any other party. Lowering of tariff barriers but no customs union with the U.S. Immediate steps to conclude pacts with the two provinces which have not come into the Dominion-provincial taxation agreements. Falling that, implementation of the public investment and social security programs in the other seven provinces as set out in the 1945 federal proposals. Speedy enactment of a comprehensive immigration program to provide sufficient population to develop national resources. Speed-up of the government's low cost housing program."; *Ibid.*

standard of living introduced by Walter Tucker, Saskatchewan Liberal leader.⁹⁷ According to the report, members of the Ontario Liberal caucus dismissed the Young Liberals as “boy scouts.”⁹⁸ James Paterson, a Young Liberal, told the *Toronto Daily Star* that the resolution had no binding consequences and that voting for it only reinforced that the Liberal Party has no plan for their struggles:

It’s going to be difficult for any delegate to go home and convince his people that this convention has accomplished anything at all if we keep on passing such innocuous and meaningless resolutions,” he declared. “We know that the country is suffering inflation, and that the high cost of living is bringing hardship to thousands of families, but so far there is no indication this convention intends to do anything about it.”⁹⁹

Moreover, some Young Liberal recommendations were altered or weakened before they were accepted by the Resolution Committee. For example, the committee significantly changed the Young Liberal resolution on a new Canadian flag in an attempt to mitigate perceived conflict between francophones and anglophones. This change stresses the oversight of senior Liberals.

According to Bothwell and Kilbourn, the Young Liberals disturbances at the Convention were “hushed in the overwhelming atmosphere of loyalty and propriety.”¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Whitaker suggests that the friction between the youth delegates and the elder members of the party represented a significant problem. The Young Liberals felt that the older members of the Party constrained their progressive stance on issues affecting Canadians. “People over 60 are doing most of the talking here and apparently they are doing most of the voting too, and it is a dismal day for liberalism in Canada when that happens,” Paterson told the *Toronto Daily Star*.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Ross Harkness, “Young Liberals Revolt, Student Raps Convention,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 6 August 1948, 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Bothwell and Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe: a Biography*, 223.

¹⁰¹ Harkness, “Young Liberals Revolt, Student Raps Convention,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 6 August 1948, 1.

The report cajoled older Liberals to listen to their younger voices, with the inference that “the Liberal party might do well to pay more attention to what young people say and think.”¹⁰² Despite disputes within the party ranks, prominent Young Liberal Dalton Camp told the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Daily Star* that his peers were not dissuaded by the policy debates.¹⁰³ Camp warned that if the Young Liberals were ignored outright, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation would welcome them with open arms.¹⁰⁴ Based on his conversations with Camp, Whitaker insists that Liberal youth were outraged at the thought of keeping their opinions to themselves, whether on policy or intra-party dissatisfaction.¹⁰⁵

The Young Liberal Federation and University Liberal Clubs represented a tiny minority of convention delegates and consequently their proposals found little policy traction. Nevertheless, the Young Liberals’ resolutions provoked conversations amongst party members at the convention and in the national press. Most Young Liberals stayed under the “Big Red Tent” and many of their ideas were ultimately adopted by St Laurent, Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau. Accordingly, the Young Liberals ultimately helped to facilitate rejuvenation within the party, as they had aspired to do.

The Woes of What Could Have Been: Paul Martin and the Liberal Leadership

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Dalton Camp would leave the Liberal Party of Canada and become a central figure in the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. He was instrumental in the 1957 and 1958 General Elections for John Diefenbaker; Ronald, “Liberal Youth Demands Canadian Flag, Anthem,” *Globe and Mail*, 7 August 1948, 3.; Robert Nielsen, “Recognize Us, Or Another Party Will--Young Liberals,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 August 1948, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Ronald, “Liberal Youth Demands Canadian Flag, Anthem,” *Globe and Mail*, 7 August 1948, 3.; Nielsen, “Recognize Us, Or Another Party Will--Young Liberals,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 7 August 1948, 15.; Interestingly, Camp would later become a strategist for the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada.

¹⁰⁵ Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 176.

Paul Martin, 45, was an up and coming member of Parliament for the Ontario riding of Essex-East, a progressive Liberal, and Minister of National Health and Welfare. With Martin's ambition well-known, Liberals and the Canadian media questioned his interest in the party leadership. The Windsor-area MP had serious concerns with King's manipulation of the leadership race, but he participated in the outgoing leader's ploys nonetheless. St Laurent told Martin that this may be his last chance to run given that Canadians would be unlikely to accept two consecutive French Catholic leaders. Despite Martin's ambitions, his concerns about King's tactics, and St Laurent's warnings, Martin declined to contest the leadership and opted to support St Laurent.

Martin let his name stand for nomination at the 1948 convention with the intention of withdrawing his candidacy and supporting St Laurent. This strategy was conceived by the wily Mackenzie King. This was a difficult decision for Martin, who dreamed of being prime minister. In his memoir, Martin professes that he felt conflicted about his career in politics, especially around the times of leadership contests:

I have often reflected on the effort it required to achieve my initial place in public life; the process of gaining the nomination was a very tedious one. At first, all I wanted to do was to keep my foot in the door and make a good showing. Certainly I had no desire to spend all my time greeting people and speechifying, but I got so involved that I could not pull away. Contradictory as it may appear, I felt my priorities should lie elsewhere... It confronted me again after Mackenzie King's retirement in 1948, and once more when I ran against Mike Pearson for the Liberal leadership a decade later.¹⁰⁶

Martin did not admit to seeking the leadership in 1948, but intimated that he considered it.¹⁰⁷

Support for a Martin leadership bid began at the grassroots level of the Liberal Party. The *Toronto Daily Star* reported that the "Draft Martin" campaign began in Martin's home region of

¹⁰⁶ Paul Martin, *A Very Public Life: Volume I, Far From Home*, (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1983), 145

¹⁰⁷ Bercuson, Thomson, and Whitaker all assert that Martin was interested in the leadership at the 1948 Convention. Bercuson, *True Patriot*, 199; Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 215; Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 177.

southwestern Ontario. In Nova Scotia, reports from the *Chronicle Herald* predicted Martin to be a serious contender. Norman MacLeod reported that Martin is “probably the most serious contender for the party leadership crown,”¹⁰⁸ emphasizing Martin’s youth and energy on the campaign trail.¹⁰⁹ The *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* and *Le Devoir* reported that Martin had a bloc of delegate support from 24 Western Ontario ridings.¹¹⁰ A similar report appeared in the *Montreal Star*.¹¹¹ The *Vancouver Sun* predicted that a Martin candidacy could thwart St Laurent of the leadership.¹¹² Other journalists reported that the “Draft Martin” movement was spreading to other regions. The *Globe and Mail* reported that Liberal support for Martin spread into central Ontario, while the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that party members in British Columbia echoed similar sounds of support.

In the end, Martin refused to seek the leadership, withdrew his nomination, and supported St Laurent’s candidacy. Mackenzie King’s tactics compromised Martin’s position. Martin believed that the contest should be open for anyone to enter but he also believed that no one could beat St Laurent. “I felt abused,” he admitted later. “Did not I, too, have the right to join my colleagues in an honorary nomination? This legerdemain confirmed my feeling that the convention was contravening the principles of liberalism: it should be open to any member of the party to seek the leadership.”¹¹³ Martin compared his situation to that of Mackenzie King’s in

¹⁰⁸ Norman MacLeod, “Quebec Election Sweep Boosts Martin’s Stock for Liberal Leadership,” *Chronicle Herald*, 4 August 1948.

¹⁰⁹ Norman M. Macleod, “Six Loom As Contenders For Liberal Leadership,” *Vancouver Sun*, 2 August 1948.

¹¹⁰ Richard Jackson, “Large Bloc Will Support Paul Martin,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 3 August 1948; “M. Paul Martin Ne Sera Pas Candidat,” *Le Devoir*, 5 August 1948.

¹¹¹ “St Laurent, Martin Camps,” *Montreal Star*, 4 August 1948, 1.

¹¹² Norman M. Macleod, “Six Loom As Contenders For Liberal Leadership,” *Vancouver Sun*, 2 August 1948.

¹¹³ Paul Martin, *A Very Public Life: Volume II, So Many Worlds*, (Toronto: Deneau, 1985), 12.

1919: “after all, he was then forty-five, exactly my age in 1948. King was being hypocritical. What would he have said or done in 1919 if he had been told that he should not contest the Liberal leadership against the great W.S. Fielding, George Graham or D.D. McKenzie?”¹¹⁴ Principle aside, Martin knew that St Laurent was going to win and thus he threw his support behind him. A Gallup poll around the time of the convention showed that support for Martin was well behind that of St Laurent. 39 percent of Liberal supporters felt that St Laurent would be the best leader in comparison to 8 percent for Gardiner, 3 percent for James Ilsley, and 2 percent for Martin.¹¹⁵ Without a viable shot at assuming the leadership, he was politically sage to support the leading candidate and secure a strong position within the future administration.

The question remained whether Liberals, or Canadians for that matter, supported another francophone, Roman Catholic Prime Minister? St Laurent had deep concerns about that question. At the 1948 Convention alternance was in its early stages and the issues surrounding race and religion remained critical concerns. Martin recalled in his memoirs how “St Laurent told a Winnipeg audience that he was ready to seek the leadership if his candidacy provoked no racial or religious objects.”¹¹⁶ Although Martin believed race and religion had no bearing in the contest,¹¹⁷ St Laurent’s biographer Thomson offered a different opinion:

Paul Martin, whose heart had been set since childhood on becoming prime minister, also pleaded with him to do so [to run for leadership]; St. Laurent advised the ambitious young minister that he was making a mistake, for even if Canadians accepted one French-speaking Catholic as prime minister, they could certainly not accept two in a row, and the

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 13.

¹¹⁵ Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, “Gallup Poll of Canada: 39 P.C. Liberal Supporters Would Choose St. Laurent,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 4 August 1948.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 6.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

result might well be that he would never realize his ambition, but Martin maintained his position.¹¹⁸

Accordingly, Martin would be an unlikely successor to St Laurent. In its coverage of St Laurent's victory, *Le Devoir* discussed the importance of a French-speaking Roman Catholic once again leading the Liberal Party:

M. St-Laurent se dit très ému du très grand honneur que le parti libéral vient pour la seconde fois en son histoire d'accorder à un Canadien de langue française. C'est le parti libéral, dit-il en français, qui a posé il y 60 ans le premier geste qui a démontré qu'il voulait être un parti dans lequel un Canadien de quelque origine, de quelque religion ou de quelque langue qu'il fut, pouvait aspirer au plus haut poste du parti. Ce geste est confirmé aujourd'hui et il constitue la preuve de la largeur d'esprit des membres anglais du parti libéral et de leur désir de nous tendre la main et nous voulons, nous prendre leur main et la serrer et coopérer pour le plus grand bien de ce pays.¹¹⁹

St Laurent's prediction about the party leadership proved to be true. Martin's chances in 1958 were hindered by both language and religion. Alternance was becoming Liberal doctrine, and Martin's leadership aspirations would prove to be a casualty of it.

Conclusion

St Laurent's first ballot victory cemented the Liberal Party leadership. Despite King's involvement, the Party overwhelmingly elected St Laurent. *Saturday Night* characterized St Laurent's victory as essential for the Liberal Party. Wilfrid Eggleston asserted that "to pass [St Laurent] over in favor of an English-speaking Canadian would have been regarded as an affront to Quebec."¹²⁰ St Laurent's francophone identity was part of King's calculation. Selecting St Laurent by an overwhelming margin ensured party and broader national unity. This victory verifies Courtney's assertion that in 1948 the parliamentary wing of the party had significant

¹¹⁸ Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, 215-216.

¹¹⁹ "Louis Saint-Laurent succède à M. Mackenzie King," *Le Devoir*, 9 August 1948, 10.

¹²⁰ Wilfrid Eggleston, "The Front Page," *Saturday Night*, 14 August 1948, 5

influence over the leadership selection process. St Laurent's significant support within cabinet and caucus assisted him in securing large delegate support. Furthermore, Herbert F. Quinn and B.K. Sandwell observed that the outcome demonstrated that policy development and leadership selection remained in the hands of the party elite.¹²¹

The 1948 leadership candidates positioned themselves differently. Power's role was to editorialize about the state of affairs for the Liberal Party. Gardiner ran to climb the political ladder. Indeed, he campaigned so fervently that he looked self-serving in comparison to his opponents. By contrast, St Laurent stood as the man with no desire to be there other than to serve his party and his country. Reports swirled about his family's sacrifice and his ability to be successful outside of Canadian politics. St Laurent was measured by a different standard.

Paul Martin decided that the 1948 Convention was not the time to seek the Liberal leadership. Although Martin concurred that St Laurent was the best candidate and delivered him an endorsement, he did so sparingly. Martin's frustration with King cannot be ignored. He wanted to be Prime Minister, but even Martin conceded that no one could have bested St Laurent. The Quebecker was the strongest candidate, and Martin knew that St Laurent, at the age of 66, could not be Liberal leader for long. Therefore, Martin bided his time, anticipating the next leadership convention.

The experienced, steady hands of William Lyon Mackenzie King were all over the 1948 convention. The outgoing Liberal Prime Minister ensured that his chosen successor took over the mantle of power. From the beginning, King was certain that St Laurent would win. He had the support of the key players in Cabinet and party captains across the country. King's involvement

¹²¹ Herbert F. Quinn, "The Third National Convention of the Liberal Party," *CJEPS* 17 (May 1951): 233; B.K. Sandwell, "The Convention System in Politics," *Queen's Quarterly* 55 (Autumn 1948-49): 346.

in the leadership contest stemmed from the need to ensure the Liberal Party was united behind St Laurent, and he left office convinced that his legacy was secure. Although some consider King's presence at the 1948 Convention a contradiction of Liberal democratic principles, he was motivated by the same considerations that guided him through his tenures as prime minister.

CHAPTER THREE
A COMMON CAUSE: PAUL MARTIN SR., LESTER PEARSON AND THE 1958
NATIONAL LIBERAL LEADERSHIP CONVENTION

Almost the last words I want to leave with you to-night are words of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In the greatest of all his speeches--made in 1877 in the city of Quebec, which has been the home of so many great Liberal leaders--he said: "I am a Liberal. I am one of those who think that everywhere in human things there are abuses to be reformed, new horizons to be opened up, and new forces to be developed." – Lester B. Pearson

On 16 January 1958, Lester Pearson assumed the Liberal leadership with grace. He acknowledged the legacy of Laurier and committed himself to a united Liberal Party, extending an immediate hand of friendship to his colleague and rival Paul Martin:

Mr. St Laurent, fellow delegates, my first words at this time must be of thanks to those delegates who supported me and helped me in this quest of mine for the Liberal leadership. And may I take this opportunity to thank those who discharged their duty and their privilege by voting for the other candidate for this position, my friend and colleague of the past and of the future, Paul Martin. We have worked together in the past in friendship and in unity. We have been close together. We were even close together in competition for the leadership of the Liberal party, and you would be surprised how often we exchanged confidences as to how things were going.¹²²

Party unity remained an essential part of the convention process, necessitating a strong relationship between Pearson and Martin in which they could set aside their personal ambitions and work together for the good of the party. An aura of unity, both in public and in private, was the Liberals best hope to move from the Opposition benches to the seats of power.

The Liberal Party had ended 1957 with an unprecedented defeat. It had lost its first election since 1930, its leader resigned, and many key Liberals with leadership potential had lost their seat in the House of Commons. When the 1958 National Liberal Leadership Convention

¹²² Lester Pearson, Coliseum, Ottawa, January 16 1948.

met at the Coliseum in Ottawa from 14-16 January, the race for succession was between three Liberals: Lester B. Pearson, age 61,¹²³ Paul Martin, 55,¹²⁴ and Reverend Harold Henderson, 51.¹²⁵ Pearson won in an overwhelming fashion on the first ballot with 1,074 votes compared to Martin's 305 and Henderson's 1.¹²⁶

The historiography of the 1958 Convention resides in the biographies of key Liberals such as Lester B. Pearson, Louis St Laurent, C.D. Howe and Jean Chrétien. It also includes Christina McCall's *Grits: An Intimate Portrait of the Liberal Party*, Paul Martin Jr.'s memoir *Hell or High Water: My Life In and Out of Politics* and Paul Martin Sr.'s memoir. These studies detail how Pearson and Martin were perceived by their colleagues and grassroots Liberals alike. Their political views, known and unknown, were important considerations for influential Liberals in choosing who to support. These decisions remained critical as the parliamentary wing of the Liberal Party retained considerable control over the leadership election.

Throughout his long career in Liberal politics Martin had advocated left-leaning policies. By contrast, Pearson had no perceived interest outside of Canadian foreign relations and his time in the St Laurent Cabinet allowed him to focus his attention there. Bothwell and Kilbourn note that Howe believed Martin to be too left-leaning to become party leader, but Pearson's lack of experience in domestic affairs never concerned the "minister of everything."¹²⁷ Paul Martin Jr.

¹²³ MP for Algoma East and former Secretary of State for External Affairs.

¹²⁴ MP for Essex East and former Minister of National Health and Welfare.

¹²⁵ Mayor of Portage la Prairie, Manitoba.

¹²⁶ National Liberal Federation of Canada, *Report of the Proceedings of the National Liberal Convention*, (Ottawa: National Liberal Federation of Canada, 1958), 245.

¹²⁷ Bothwell and Kilbourn note that "Martin's commitment to heavy spending on social security had never appealed to Howe, while Pearson's involvement in External Affairs had placed him in a field in which Howe felt no compelling interest or expertise, and no occasion to quarrel." *C.D. Howe*, 336.

confirms in his memoirs that his father was too left-leaning for some Liberals. Martin had been front and centre in the social reform debates while Pearson had focused his attentions on international politics. “Although he was a true social reformer and later brought in medicare as prime minister,” Martin Jr. writes, “Pearson had not participated in many of the party’s social reform debates of the early 1950s, in which my father, as minister of health and welfare had been at the centre.”¹²⁸ English echoes this view. “Few knew where Pearson stood, and that was an advantage” his biographer observed. “Liberals and others rightly regarded Paul Martin as being on the left.”¹²⁹ In his memoirs, Martin Sr. acknowledged that “Liberals of the C.D. Howe school thought of me as a closet socialist and resented my pushing social welfare measures, hospital insurance most of all.”¹³⁰ Right-leaning Liberals had a difficult time accepting Martin, and Pearson’s relatively unknown positions on domestic politics raised fewer concerns.

This chapter clarifies a point that the historiography fails to state firmly. Christina McCall notes Pearson’s reluctance to embrace the role of Liberal leader. This chapter demonstrates that Pearson sought the prime minister’s office with the same basic desire that motivated Martin. Pearson matched Martin throughout the 1958 leadership race in effort to win. Pearson’s portrayal of reluctance to seek the leadership was a political fabrication to win over the Liberal Party.

This chapter explores four main themes. First, it considers the front-runner status attributed to Lester Pearson by the Canadian media, and the status of Paul Martin as underdog. It also analyzes the regional support that Pearson developed across the country. Second, this chapter considers the press coverage afforded to Maryon Pearson and Eleanor Martin. Third, it

¹²⁸ Paul Martin, *Hell or High Water: My Life In and Out of Politics*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2008), 29.

¹²⁹ English, *The Worldly Years*, 196.

¹³⁰ Paul Martin, *A Very Public Life Volume II: So Many Worlds*, (Toronto: Deneau Publishers, 1985), 310.

reviews the campaign tactics of Martin and Pearson, exploring both traditional strategies and new practices. The chapter also discusses the evolution of alternance as Liberal Party doctrine by the time of the 1958 convention. Fourth, the chapter assesses the relationship between Pearson and Martin during the leadership race, its impact on their friendship, and the role the duo played in stabilizing the Liberal Party.

10 Years Later: Back at the Coliseum

On September 6 1957 the Rt. Hon. Louis St Laurent, former Prime Minister of Canada and Leader of the Official Opposition, notified Duncan K. MacTavish, President of the National Liberal Federation, that he intended to retire after a successor was chosen at a leadership convention.¹³¹ Each of the 265 ridings sent three delegates for the convention. In addition, other delegates were made up of Liberal MPs and Senators, in addition to either the previous or future Liberal candidates; the members of the Executive Committees for the National Liberal Federation of Canada, the Young Liberal Federation of Canada, and the Canadian University Liberal Federation; the presidents and two other officers of each of the ten Provincial Liberal associations; the Provincial organizations of Liberal Women; the Provincial organizations of the Young Liberals; as well as the president and two other officers of each of the university Liberal clubs in Canada.¹³² There were 1,534 delegates and 942 alternate delegates at the convention.¹³³ The *Toronto Daily Star* reported that eighty per cent of delegates were attending their first

¹³¹ National Liberal Federation of Canada, *Report of the Proceedings of the National Liberal Convention*, I.5.

¹³² *Ibid*, 1.8-1.9.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 1.16.

convention¹³⁴ and only 10 per cent of delegates had been to the 1948 Convention.¹³⁵ The rules for electing the leader would be the same as they were in 1948.¹³⁶ Unlike 1948, Louis St Laurent refused to involve himself in the leadership race as King had done.

St Laurent stayed impartial prior to and during the 1958 Convention. Dale C. Thomson notes that the former Prime Minister and his wife preferred Pearson but they refused to make any indication publicly.¹³⁷ John English suggests that although Pearson never mentioned it in his memoirs St Laurent likely gave him his support in private.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the retiring Liberal leader let the convention play out, apparently unconcerned that the Party could spin out of control and into division. This is the concern King had in 1948. Fortunately for Liberals, Lester Pearson and Paul Martin sought to take St Laurent's place. The stakes were higher than ever as Canadians had the opportunity to see the race unfold live on television.

The Liberal Party Convention Committee sought to ensure the atmosphere would transfer to the new medium of television. The venue had to accommodate camera platforms, areas for interviews, panel discussions and special broadcasts. The CBC became the official broadcaster and enlisted a crew of 200 people to assemble the sets and 150 people to broadcast.¹³⁹ CBC offered immediate translation services for their English television and radio as well as French television and radio broadcasts.¹⁴⁰ The efforts sought to make the convention a political spectacle

¹³⁴ Angela Burke, "Rush Last-minute Details," *Toronto Daily Star*, 8 January 1958, page 1.

¹³⁵ John Bird, "Confident Liberals Argue Only on Whether They'll Win This Election or Next," *Toronto Daily Star*, 8 January 1958, page 6.

¹³⁶ National Liberal Federation of Canada, *Report of the Proceedings of the National Liberal Convention*, 15.

¹³⁷ Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent*, 527.

¹³⁸ English, *The Worldly Years*, 195.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

for all Canadians. Lessons remained to be learned, and it took Liberals time to develop this production.

Front-Runner Politics: Pearson Without Reservation

Headlines such as “Pearson Seen Shoo-in As Three Enter Race” appeared across the country in the days prior to the convention.¹⁴¹ Pearson enjoyed front-runner status, similar to Louis St Laurent in 1948. The Canadian media portrayed Pearson as the leader-in-waiting, with strong support throughout the Liberal caucus. Pearson predicted himself to win on the first ballot.¹⁴² By contrast, Martin was cast the underdog. Martin eventually adopted this theme in his own campaign, and it gained more traction in the press. But the outlook remained poor for Martin heading into the leadership vote in the evening of 16 January 1958.

Pearson’s Nobel Prize in 1957 for his efforts to prevent war during the Suez Crisis made him a particularly attractive candidate. The historiography suggests that the prize all but assured Pearson of the Liberal leadership.¹⁴³ English argues that the Nobel Prize demonstrated that Pearson fit in well with the world’s most influential leaders, an aura that no other Liberal could match:

As a world statesman, Pearson had already shown that the home town boy can bat with the best of them in the biggest league of all. And Canadians like their prime minister to be a man they can be proud of in any company. Indeed they did, and do, and the Nobel Peace Prize, announced in October 1957, assured Pearson of the victory. As momentum thrust him forward others clung to him, not for the ride so much as for the change to influence his direction.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ “Pearson Seen Shoo-in As Three Enter Race,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 15 January 1958, 1.

¹⁴² “Pearson Predicts First Ballot Win,” *Chronicle Herald*, 14 January 1958, 1.

¹⁴³ Beal, *The Pearson Phenomenon*, 140; Dale C. Thomson, *Louis St. Laurent: Canadian*, (Toronto: McMillan, 1967), 527-528; Martin, *Chrétien Volume 1*, 93.

¹⁴⁴ English, *The Worldly Years*, 196.

In 1957 Pearson emerged as Canada's premier international statesman. "Mike Pearson's best claim to the leadership is not his undoubted popularity, his common touch," journalist John Bird said. "It is that indefinable thing called 'size.' He is a big-time man, big enough to be a leader."¹⁴⁵ The former Secretary of State for External Affairs rode that reputation to the leadership of the Liberal Party and eventually to the Prime Minister's Office.

Lawrence Martin suggests that when Jean Chrétien arrived at the 1958 Convention as a Young Liberal delegate it was all but known that Pearson would be the next leader.¹⁴⁶ On 8 January 1958 the *Toronto Daily Star* asserted in its convention coverage that Pearson was the front-runner.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile the *Montreal Star* was already speculating on the next federal election and what it meant for the Liberals under Pearson. James A. Oastler wrote that the main "reason for not seeking an election at this point is the Liberal fear that it will take more than six weeks to convince the voters that the Pearson government is not the same as the St. Laurent government."¹⁴⁸ The *Globe and Mail* and the *Montreal Star* echoed these reports until the vote itself.¹⁴⁹ On 9 January the *Toronto Daily Star* even delivered an endorsement for Pearson. "In moving to the leadership of the Liberals and probably in due course to prime minister," the editorial proclaimed, "he would be able to speak and direct foreign policy with the added

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Martin, *Chrétien Volume 1*, 93.

¹⁴⁷ James Y. Nicol, "Campaign Disrupts Martin," *Toronto Daily Star*, 8 January 1958, page 29.

¹⁴⁸ James A. Oastler, "Liberals Expected To 'Take It Easy,'" *Montreal Star*, 8 January 1958, page 2.

¹⁴⁹ Harvey Hickey, "Large Battery Of Speakers For Convention," *Globe and Mail*, 10 January 1958, page 13; "Political Leadership: Some Aspects," *Montreal Star*, 11 January 1958; Robert Taylor, "Confident Pearson to Win, But Martin Making Good Show," *Toronto Daily Star*, 13 January 1958, page 1 and 3; Clark Davey, "2 Confident Men Look for Victory in Liberal Fight," *Globe and Mail*, 14 January 1958, page 1; "Early Pearson Victory Predicted; Martin Campaign Slowing Down," *Globe and Mail*, 15 January 1958, page 1; Harold Morrison, "Pearson Likely To Win Leadership On First Vote," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 16 January 1958, page 1; and J. E. Belliveau, "Pearson Too Far In Front," *Toronto Daily Star*, 16 January 1958, page 33.

authority of the head of the government.”¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the same editorial suggested that Pearson had earned the right to be leader.¹⁵¹

In Patrick Brennan’s *Reporting the Nation’s Business*, he observes that Pearson’s friends in the media -- Grant Dexter, Bruce Hutchison, George Ferguson, and Blair Fraser -- helped Pearson become Liberal leader. “For the likes of Fraser, Ferguson, Dexter, and Hutchison, whose perennial boosting of Pearson had become almost a full-time sideline to their regular work, seeing he got the top job became an obsession.”¹⁵² Furthermore, Brennan says their efforts extended to the derailment of Martin’s campaign. “While all of them considered Martin an egoist and a self-promoter...the overriding reason for opposing him was that he dared to challenge their favourite’s steady advance to the top.”¹⁵³ John English observes similar dynamics.¹⁵⁴ Martin wrote in his memoirs that he had caught on to the plan: “some of Mike’s cronies in the press sought to put forward the view that he was just sitting back and leaving the politicking to me, [but] this was far from true.”¹⁵⁵ Martin’s perspective had validity. Pearson’s front-runner status in the days leading up to the Convention created momentum that Martin was unable to match. The similarity of the Martin and Pearson campaigns was clear but was indistinguishable in the press.

Jean Chrétien firmly embraced Martin’s role as the long shot when he arrived at the convention and for this reason he decided to support the former Health and Welfare minister.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ “Pearson As Leader,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 January 1958, page 6.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Brennan, *Reporting the Nation’s Business*, 167.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 168.

¹⁵⁴ English, *The Worldly Years*, 194.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 198.

¹⁵⁶ Martin, *Chrétien Volume 1*, 93.

Paul Martin eventually incorporated this underdog status into his own quotes. “It’s going to be 1919 all over again,” the leadership hopeful quipped to *Toronto Daily Star* reporter J.E. Belliveau, referring to the 1919 Convention when Mackenzie King won the Liberal Party leadership.¹⁵⁷ The media embraced Martin’s rhetoric. “Trailing far behind his main opponent,” Bruce MacDonald wrote, “Hon. Paul Martin is beginning to force pace by taking on the self-styled role of an underdog battling against entrenched authority.”¹⁵⁸ The *Toronto Daily Star* ran the headline “Underdog Martin Fights to Cut Pearson’s Lead,” topping a narrative that was pure fiction spun by the former Health and Welfare minister himself:

Mr. Martin seeking to capitalize on his position as the underdog, has been working feverishly to align himself with the party grassroots in a movement against the party ‘brass,’ represented by all those former cabinet ministers, senators and other who for so long have controlled the destiny of the party.¹⁵⁹

The day of the leadership vote the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* ran a story linking Martin’s underdog status with the grassroots of the Liberal Party. Speaking to delegates, Martin preached that the grassroots needed to take control of the Party. “He emphasized the leadership should not be imposed on the convention,” the story suggested. “It must come from the rank and file.”¹⁶⁰ Martin spun a false story of grassroots revolt, but Pearson still won by an overwhelming margin. Although no permanent damage was done, such claims could have damaged the Liberal Party outwardly and within its organization.

The *Toronto Daily Star* reported that Pearson was going to win significant support from Western delegates. They reported that British Columbia delegates were solidly behind Pearson,

¹⁵⁷ J.E. Belliveau, “We’re All For Mike,’ N.B. Irish Say,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 14 January 1958, page 21.

¹⁵⁸ Bruce MacDonald, “Liberal Race Gets Hot,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 11 January 1958, page 5.

¹⁵⁹ Bruce MacDonald, “Underdog Martin Fights To Cut Pearson’s Lead,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 15 January 1958, page 3.

¹⁶⁰ Harold Morrison, “Pearson Likely to Win Leadership On First Vote,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, page 2.

quoting a prominent Liberal that “Our rank and file is almost completely for Pearson.”¹⁶¹ The Alberta delegates told the *Toronto Daily Star* that they would remain publicly uncommitted to any of the candidates until the Convention got under way, but the paper still suggested Pearson was likely their preference.¹⁶² Walter Gordon confirmed the *Toronto Daily Star*’s calculated guess in his memoirs. “All of them owned large ranches and all held university degrees, about half of them Ph.D.’s in Agriculture Economics,” Gordon wrote. “I have no doubt that all the Alberta delegates had decided [Pearson] would be their choice for leader.”¹⁶³ In Saskatchewan the accounts of Pearson’s support remained speculative, but Grant Maxwell noted that “unofficially those close to the 100 Saskatchewan delegates entitled to vote guess they will go two-to-one for Lester B. Pearson.”¹⁶⁴ In Manitoba the *Toronto Daily Star* offered its most resounding endorsement. “If the choice for the national Liberal leadership depended only on votes of Manitoba delegates,” L.F. Earl wrote, “the honor would go to Lester B. Pearson.”¹⁶⁵ One day later the *Winnipeg Free Press* suggested similar expectations from the Manitoba Liberal delegates. “Most of the delegates leaving Manitoba Saturday night for the Liberal convention in Ottawa next week have indicated that Mr. Pearson is their first choice.”¹⁶⁶ Ultimately Pearson’s significant margin of victory suggests that these reports were accurate. Pearson was the candidate

¹⁶¹ Ian Street, “B.C. Almost Solid For Pearson,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 January 1958, page 6.

¹⁶² Ken Mason, “Alberta Betting Favors Pearson,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 January 1958, page 6.

¹⁶³ Member of Parliament for Davenport in Ontario and President of the Privy Council; Walter Gordon, *A Political Memoir*, (London: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 73.

¹⁶⁴ Grant Maxwell, “Saskatchewan Delegation ‘Open,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 January 1958, page 6.

¹⁶⁵ L.F. Earl, “Clear Preference In Manitoba,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 January 1958, page 6.

¹⁶⁶ “Manitoba Liberals Will Back Pearson for Leadership,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 January 1958.

English-speaking Liberals wanted: an anglophone Protestant who would win English-Canadian seats lost to the Conservatives in Ontario and the Maritimes.

The race between a French-speaking Catholic and an English-speaking Protestant created significant discussion about whom the majority of the Quebec delegates would ultimately support. Pierre Vigeant reported that Quebec Liberals were falling unenthusiastically behind Pearson. “Quebec delegates to the forthcoming Liberal convention may give a majority vote to Lester B. Pearson,” he wrote, “but it will not be enthusiastic support.”¹⁶⁷ Vigeant suggested that their support was conflicting with their interest in Martin, and that ultimately Quebec delegates were leaning towards Pearson because Martin’s chances were unpropitious. Moreover, Vigeant asserted that their consideration for Martin is reflects the absence of George C. Marler¹⁶⁸ and Lionel Chevrier¹⁶⁹ in the race.¹⁷⁰ A few days later the *Montreal Star* reported that the majority of the Quebec delegates were going to support Pearson. “It seems that three quarters of the Quebec delegates favor Pearson” journalist Fernand Renault quoted from a delegate leaving the Quebec delegate’s caucus.¹⁷¹ Another delegate was quoted as stating: “I guess if we acted according to our hearts we would vote for Martin. But we have to be practical, you know.” Simply put, Renault concluded, “Quebeckers expect Mr. Pearson to be the winner and this is obviously one of the reasons why they have joined the ‘I like Mike’ movement.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Pierre Vigeant, “Quebec Support For Pearson Cool,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 January 1958, page 6.

¹⁶⁸ MP for Saint-Antoine--Westmount.

¹⁶⁹ Formerly MP for Stormont. MP for Laurier.

¹⁷⁰ Vigeant, “Quebec Support For Pearson Cool,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 January 1958, page 6.

¹⁷¹ Fernand Renault, “Quebec Delegates Said Pro-Pearson,” *Montreal Star*, 14 January 1958.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

In an editorial, *Le Devoir* suggested that Pearson would be an unpopular candidate in Quebec and that Paul Martin would be the Liberal Party's best choice. R. R. Desaulneirs of *Le Devoir* wrote that "[l]es libéraux furent défaits dans toutes les provinces sauf celle de Québec et leur seule espérance de survie comme parti est de soigner les électeurs de cette province. Paul Martin demeure leur seule et dernière chance."¹⁷³ Moreover, *Le Devoir* challenged the view that Quebec delegates were following Liberal MPs to support Pearson:

Selon nos informations, à peu près tous les anciens ministres libéraux sont des partisans de M. Pearson de même que la majorité des députés québécois. Mais cela ne veut pas nécessairement dire; d'après certains commentateurs, que les délégations voient du même oeil le problème de la chefferie.¹⁷⁴

However, Guy Lamarche of *Le Devoir* reported two days later that a large number of Quebec delegates would in fact be supporting Pearson.¹⁷⁵

Beal argues that Pearson lacked support from members of the old-guard in the Liberal Party who had served in the days of King. This group "included a number of old-guard cabinet ministers and former ministers who still carried great weight in party councils and who were dubious about Pearson as the right man to lead an organization that would have to fight hard to regain power."¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, Beal suggests that Pearson's persona weighed against him:

Many senior Liberals looked on Pearson as a 'do-gooder' type; a darling of the eggheads; a man who didn't understand what back-room politics was all about; a man, in fact, who even had an active distaste for the all the comball practices required in democracies for the winning of political power.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ R. R. Desaulneirs, "Pearson ne sera pas un candidat populaire," *Le Devoir*, 10 January 1958.

¹⁷⁴ "Echos du congrès libéral," *Le Devoir*, 14 January 1958, page 1.

¹⁷⁵ Guy Lamarche, "Une forte proportion des députés québécois votera pour M. Lester Pearson," *Le Devoir*, 16 January 1958. It could also be as English suggests that the largely French-speaking Liberal caucus in Ottawa made Quebec Liberals understand they needed an English-speaking Protestant leader to recover the lost seats in Ontario and the Maritimes. This question will be reconsidered in the discussion of *alternance* later in the chapter.

¹⁷⁶ Beal, *The Pearson Phenomenon*, 141.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Bothwell and Kilbourn counter Beal, observing that Howe supported Pearson in private.¹⁷⁸ These historians also note that Howe refused Martin's plea for support.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, English argues that Pearson had significant support in the Party – “not only of Liberal youth but also of ‘nearly two-thirds’ of the Liberal MPs who had sat in the last House of Commons and who could be expected to exercise their influence in support of Mike in their constituencies.”¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, Pearson enjoyed the support of staunch Liberals such as Jimmy Sinclair,¹⁸¹ Jack Pickersgill,¹⁸² and Howe.¹⁸³ Sinclair was first elected in 1945 and became a member of St Laurent's cabinet. Pickersgill was a longtime secretary to King and became a leading member of the Official Opposition for the Liberals against John Diefenbaker's Government and serving as Government House Leader during Pearson's years as prime minister in a string of minority governments. These bona fide supporters had considerable influence in Liberal circles.

The Other Contest: Maryon Pearson or Eleanor Martin?

Days before the 1958 Convention opened, the *Globe and Mail* first reported on the wives of the leadership contenders.¹⁸⁴ The articles characterize Maryon Pearson as the quintessential diplomat's wife. Her interviews create the impression that she and her husband lived an irregular

¹⁷⁸ Bothwell and Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe*, 336.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ English, *The Worldly Years*, 195.

¹⁸¹ MP for Vancouver North and MP for Coast-Capilano. Former Minister of Fisheries.

¹⁸² Assistant Private Secretary to Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King; MP for Bonavista-Twillingate; Former Secretary of State for Canada, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Government House Leader and Minister of Transport.

¹⁸³ English, *The Worldly Years*, 195.

¹⁸⁴ “Mrs. Pearson At Home and Abroad,” *Globe and Mail*, 11 January 1958, page 10.

Canadian life. The articles included little on the Pearson family and focused more on their worldly pursuits. By contrast, the interviews with Eleanor Martin portrayed a household with family front and centre. Mrs. Martin's praised her children and was quick to defend her husband. These portrayals of the wives resembled the portrayal of the candidates themselves: the worldly, well-liked, internationally-praised Lester Pearson, and the hardworking, long-serving, ultimate partisan, Paul Martin. Martin's considerable international experience received limited attention in the press or party circles in comparison to that of Pearson.

Reporters clung to Maryon Pearson's international prestige as well as her domesticity: her interests in cooking and dancing, as well as her uncanny ability at making a new home in cities all over the world.¹⁸⁵ "[Mike] likes eating at home and is very flattering about my cooking," Maryon. Pearson told the *Winnipeg Free Press*.¹⁸⁶ Even more, the Pearson children and five grandchildren reinforced Mrs. Pearson's commitment to her family. Regardless, media portrayals of Mrs. Pearson focused on her eccentric life as a diplomat's wife, and thus were substantively different from portrayals of Eleanor Martin. According to the *Montreal Star*, Mrs. Pearson maintained a six-bedroom apartment home in Ottawa but has a housekeeper come in once a week.¹⁸⁷ The Pearson home was filled with gifts they received on their many travels around the world.¹⁸⁸ Quite expectedly the wife of Lester Pearson came off relatively out of touch with the average Canadian. "Mrs. Pearson wishes now that she had counted the number of times she has crossed the Atlantic," one *Montreal Star* story noted, "but she has long since lost track."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ "Wives Play Their Part in Leadership Battle," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 January 1958.

¹⁸⁷ Helen Boyd, "Mrs. L.B. Pearson Travels World," *Montreal Star*, 15 January 1958.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Nonetheless, Maryon indicated her connection to Canadiana. Be it the oil paintings by Canadian artists or her fascination for Canadian literature, Mrs. Pearson demonstrated an abiding and continuing interest with Canadian culture.¹⁹⁰

The home of Eleanor Martin was far from the home of Pearson. Nell, as her friends affectionately called her, suggested in an interview with the *Montreal Star* that “my job is to keep our home running smoothly and I don’t think the public wants anything further from me.”¹⁹¹ Mrs. Martin put her role as a homemaker first. “On the eve of the convention,” Helen Boyd reported, “Mrs. Martin was more concerned that there were enough minute steaks in the deep freeze and enough bedding for out of town friends than about what she would wear.”¹⁹² There was no mention of Eleanor’s profession as a pharmacist or her handling of the Martin finances. Journalists portrayed her simply as a mother and wife. This image stands in contrast to Mrs. Pearson, who quipped that she did not know what to wear at the convention.¹⁹³ Nell talks about her insistence that her children become fully bilingual and receive great education.¹⁹⁴ The Martin living room is filled with family portraits, Canadian art, and cartoons drawn of Mr. Martin through his long career as a politician. Her only concern with her husband’s career was the difficult toll it took on their family.¹⁹⁵ Like Mrs. Pearson, unnamed sources in media reports criticized Eleanor Martin for not befriending wives of Liberal MPs.¹⁹⁶ Although she admitted to

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Helen Boyd, “Mrs. Paul Martin Is No ‘Politician,’” *Montreal Star*, 14 1958.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Boyd, “Mrs. L.B. Pearson Travels World,” *Montreal Star*, 15 January 1958.

¹⁹⁴ Boyd, “Mrs. Paul Martin Is No ‘Politician,’” *Montreal Star*, 14 1958.

¹⁹⁵ “Wives Play Their Part in Leadership Battle,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 January 1958.

¹⁹⁶ Boyd, “Mrs. L.B. Pearson Travels World,” *Montreal Star*, 15 January 1958; Boyd, “Mrs. Paul Martin Is No ‘Politician,’” *Montreal Star*, 14 1958.

refraining from talking politics, Eleanor Martin expressed her distaste for alternance. “I believe strongly in toleration,” she attests, “and feel that since my husband has the qualifications of a leader he should not be discriminated against because of race or religion.”¹⁹⁷ Although she offered no comment in 1968, Mrs. Martin’s recorded position is interesting in light of her husband running towards alternance at the next convention.

An Evolving Practice of Party Politics: How to Win a Leadership Convention

The 1958 National Liberal Leadership Convention demonstrated a fundamental shift in the methods utilized by Liberals to win their Party’s leadership. By the time of the 1958 leadership race it was no longer practice to show up with no organization. Both Pearson and Martin took opportunities to prepare for the 1958 Convention, contacting individual delegates by letter and even telephone to try to recruit them to their side.

Pearson is adamant in his memoirs that he did not seek the leadership. The former diplomat contended that he simply allowed his name to stand: “Moreover, I was not accepting, or even seeking, a new position for which, frankly, I had no particular desire. I was merely allowing my name to go before the convention which would make the decision.”¹⁹⁸ These comments are disingenuous. He clearly wanted to succeed St Laurent. Furthermore, Pearson actively campaigned for the job. “The leadership contest was an easy one for me,” he recalled. “Indeed, it was no contest, in the sense that I made few personal appeals, by canvass, letter, or visit.”¹⁹⁹ John Robertson Beal observed the leadership race differently. “As Martin’s quiet campaign began to

¹⁹⁷ Boyd, “Mrs. Paul Martin Is No ‘Politician,” *Montreal Star*, 14 1958.

¹⁹⁸ Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, volume 3, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 28.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

be felt in Toronto,” Beal observed, “the young Mike Pearson fans began to worry that the Windsor attorney would get the post by default, since Pearson apparently had no organization at work.”²⁰⁰ In response, Pearson and his supporters increased their efforts. Christina McCall noted that Walter Gordon organized a bi-partisan dinner to celebrate Pearson’s award of the Nobel Prize and began to campaign on his behalf.²⁰¹

“Veteran politician Paul Martin and diplomat Lester B. Pearson,” the *Montreal Star* reported, “have started a pre-convention fight for the Liberal leadership.”²⁰² Both candidates sent letters to more than 1,500 Liberal delegates prior to the Convention.²⁰³ Nevertheless, Pearson’s supporters pointed out to the press that their candidate did not personally like the tactic.²⁰⁴ No matter, by actively campaigning, Pearson’s tactics diverged from the gentlemanly notion of the leadership race preached by King and practiced by St Laurent at the 1948 Convention -- but he managed his maneuvers while evading scrutiny.²⁰⁵

Martin matched Pearson’s pursuit of delegates ahead of the convention. The *Toronto Daily Star* reported that Martin actually sent over 2,800 letters to delegates but never once asked who they intended to support.²⁰⁶ The letter asked delegates to advise the Essex East MP if he

²⁰⁰ Beal, *The Pearson Phenomenon*, 140.

²⁰¹ Christina McCall-Newman, *Grits: An Intimate Portrait of The Liberal Party*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), 32.

²⁰² “Begin Fight For Liberal Leadership,” *Montreal Star*, 7 January 1958, page 1.

²⁰³ “Begin Fight For Liberal Leadership,” *Montreal Star*, 7 January 1958, page 1; “Croll Whacks Martin On Leadership Letter,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 January 1958, page 13; “Paul Martin a porté un coup défendu, prétend un partisan de L.B. Pearson,” *Le Devoir*, 8 January 1958.

²⁰⁴ “Begin Fight For Liberal Leadership,” *Montreal Star*, 7 January 1958, page 1; “Croll Whacks Martin On Leadership Letter,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 January 1958, page 13; “Paul Martin a porté un coup défendu, prétend un partisan de L.B. Pearson,” *Le Devoir*, 8 January 1958.

²⁰⁵ “Croll Whacks Martin On Leadership Letter,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 January 1958, page 13.

²⁰⁶ Nicol, “Campaign Disrupts Martin,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 8 January 1958, page 29.

should seek the leadership. The Martin campaign reportedly received between 500 and 600 replies of encouragement, but the responses did not include firm commitments of support.²⁰⁷ The *Montreal Star* reported that Martin received over 600 pledged delegates.²⁰⁸ Interestingly, the 600 “pledged delegates” matches the 600 letter replies the Martin campaign claimed to have received.

Martin’s letter to delegates also spurred controversy between the candidates. Martin’s letter said that if he were Prime Minister, Lester Pearson would be returned to the post of Secretary of State for External Affairs. “I shall have at my right hand and reappoint to our most important cabinet post the greatest minister of external affairs Canada has ever had,” Martin’s communiqué boasted.²⁰⁹ Members of the Pearson camp were furious with Martin’s tactic of casting Pearson in a role before Martin was leader. Senator David Croll, a former Mayor of Windsor, told reporters that Martin had hit below the belt.²¹⁰ Croll sought to create the impression that Martin was fighting the leadership campaign in the trenches, while portraying Pearson in an opposite light. The *Globe and Mail* noted that Pearson made no comments about Martin in his letter to delegates.

Martin called delegates who replied to his letter personally, reportedly making close to 400 long-distance calls in all.²¹¹ The telephone strategy received no complaints from the press or

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Robert Taylor, “Confident Pearson To Win, But Martin Making Good Show,” *Toronto Star*, 13 January 1958, 1.

²⁰⁹ “Croll Whacks Martin On Leadership Letter,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 January 1958, page 13.

²¹⁰ Ibid; “Begin Fight For Liberal Leadership,” *Montreal Star*, 7 January 1958, page 1; “Paul Martin a porté un coup défendu, prétend un partisan de L.B. Pearson,” *Le Devoir*, 8 January 1958.

²¹¹ “Begin Fight For Liberal Leadership,” *Montreal Star*, 7 January 1958, page 1; “Croll Whacks Martin On Leadership Letter,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 January 1958, page 13; James Y. Nicol, “Rivals Disagree On Ties, Too,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 10 January 1958; “Paul Martin a porté un coup défendu, prétend un partisan de L.B. Pearson,” *Le Devoir*, 8 January 1958.

negative comments from Liberals at the time. Nonetheless, some Liberals were offended. Former Liberal strategist Keith Davey, a delegate from Eglinton in Toronto, remembers when Paul Martin made one of those calls to him a month before the Convention:

Martin phoned me one day that December and although we had never met, he greeted me like a long-lost friend. First of all, he wanted to know how the new baby was (not yet born, as it happened; Ian Scott Davey arrived on January 4, 1958). Then Martin hoped I would not allow the convention to become a feud between St. Michael's (his college) and Victoria (Pearson's). Needless to say, I firmed my resolution to support Mike Pearson.²¹²

Davey alludes to a level of insincerity from Martin, a greater trend that is quietly noticed in the media's portrayal of the leadership race. Martin's aggressive strategy at courting delegates looked less noble than Pearson's efforts, even if Pearson wanted to win as much as Martin did.

Pearson and Martin picked up the pace for campaigning when they arrived at the 1958 Convention, and both candidates took the time to meet the delegates as they arrived in Ottawa. Martin greeted delegates in the lobby of the Chateau Laurier, and Pearson had a notable welcome for the Liberal delegates from the West. "Wearing a white 10-gallon cowboy hat and flashing a wide grin," the *Winnipeg Free Press* observed, "Hon. Lester B. Pearson greeted western delegates as they arrived at Union depot here Monday."²¹³ This was not regular attire for Pearson.

The press cast Pearson as the "available" candidate. Tim Creery of the *Montreal Star* wrote that Pearson "was ready and willing to meet and talk to voting delegates and offer his services as leader."²¹⁴ In contrast, he reported that Martin was "gunning for the leadership with everything he's got, seeking out every delegate he can find and bringing it bear his formidable

²¹² Davey, *The Rainmaker*, (Toronto: Stoddart, 1986), 13.

²¹³ "Down By The Station --It's Mike," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 January 1958, page 1.

²¹⁴ Tim Creery, "Individuality, Stamps Pearson, Martin Drives for Liberal Leadership," *Montreal Star*, 14 January 1958.

powers of persuasion.”²¹⁵ The *Winnipeg Free Press* offered a similar contrast: “Mr. Pearson’s campaign at the opening day of the convention was played in low key while Mr. Martin was campaigning at a high pitch.”²¹⁶ Once again the theme was Pearson’s casual and reluctant attitude versus Martin’s desire to be prime minister.

Martin’s leadership campaign was innovative. His team set up a daily campaign newspaper, the *Liberal Convention Daily*. The *Montreal Star* reported that the newspaper “hammers home the idea that Paul Martin is the political fighter who can win at the local riding level and in the cut and thrust of parliamentary debate.”²¹⁷ Creery noted that a copy of the paper arrived at 7 a.m. on each of the three days of the Convention, in both English and French, for each of the 3,400 delegates.²¹⁸ The paper mixed straight news and campaign material. “One page gives straight news of the convention,” the journalist observed, “while another is unabashed propaganda for Martin.”²¹⁹ Whether Liberal delegates read it is unclear.

Both Pearson and Martin implemented new tactics while recycling the traditional techniques of good conversations and handshakes. This significant change in Liberal Party culture led various delegates to complain to reporters. “Many delegates are just a trifle bewildered at the tactics used by some workers to influence their vote,” Ben Rose reported. “Some delegates wandering around the lobby were downright irritated.”²²⁰ McCall noted:

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Victor Mackie, “Martin In Catch-Up Bid, Tries To Shuffle Agenda,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 14 January 1958.

²¹⁷ Creery, “Individuality, Stamps Pearson, Martin Drives for Liberal Leadership,” *Montreal Star*, 14 January 1958.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ben Rose, “Battle of the Buttons Rages in Corridors Both Sides Confident,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 14 January 1958, page 1.

²²⁰ James A. Oaster, “Delegates Met By Pearson, Martin Backers,” *Montreal Star*, 14 January 1958.

Martin, who had a better record of service to the party as an MP for twenty-three years and as a effective minister of national health and welfare, besides an outstanding academic background in law and international studies was seen as a ward-heeling pol. He wanted power, curious create, and he let people see this base desire.²²¹

By contrast, Pearson demonstrated a show of reluctance, similar to that of St Laurent in 1948.²²²

Similarly, Beal asserts that Pearson had already decided that if Liberals wanted him to be the next leader of the Party that he would do so.²²³ The historiography characterizes Martin as harbouring an insatiable desire to be Prime Minister and Pearson having the role thrust upon him. This factor demonstrates a continuation of the gentlemanly politics of the 1948 Convention that saw a reluctant St Laurent defeat the allegedly power-hungry Jimmy Gardiner.

The Beginning of *Alternance*

The *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* wrote in its editorial section on 9 January 1958 that religion and race qualifications would not be a factor at the 1958 National Liberal Leadership Convention. “Fortunately there seems to be general agreement that religious or racial qualifications should have no bearing on the final choice,” it editorialized. “Whether there was a tradition against succession of one French-Canadian Catholic by another or not, Canada is now an adult nation which needs the best leadership available.”²²⁴

This depiction is contentious. Beal insisted that alternance was a factor at the 1958 Convention.²²⁵ English concluded that Pearson’s election was associated with the principles of alternance but not guided by the doctrine itself. Instead, English argued that Pearson’s victory

²²¹ McCall-Newman, *Grits*, 32.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Beal, *The Pearson Phenomenon*, 139.

²²⁴ “Leadership Race Temp Heightened,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 9 January 1958, page 6.

²²⁵ Beal, *The Pearson Phenomenon*, 132.

revealed political optics aimed at winning back government. The Liberal Party needed to revert to an Anglophone Protestant leader to win back ridings lost to John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives in the 1957 general election. "[J]ournalists quickly claimed that [Paul Martin's] chances were bad," English argues, "not because he lacked political skills and support but because the party had to choose an English Canadian and, preferably a Protestant to recover the dozens of seats they had lost in English Protestant bastions in Ontario and the Maritimes."²²⁶ English associated the 1958 Convention with language and religion.

An examination of press coverage clarifies these opposing views on Pearson's election as Liberal leader, supporting English's conclusions. While alternance had traction in the Canadian media, it was not the defining factor at the convention. Nevertheless the election of Pearson cemented alternance as doctrine in subsequent Liberal leadership races. In 1968 alternance was infused as leadership criteria for Liberal delegates at a time when the election of a francophone or anglophone did not aid or dampen electoral strategy. In 1958 the scenario demonstrated that the Party was more concerned about winning elections than following tradition. This section considers three questions in drawing this conclusion. First it addresses whether alternance was a factor in the race according to both Liberals and the Canadian media. Second, it explores why Quebec appeared to support Pearson over Martin. Third, the section discusses why the 1958 Convention cemented alternance as doctrine in future elections for Liberal leadership.

Walter Gordon remarked in his memoirs that Pearson had the advantage of seeking the leadership after nine years of St Laurent in the Prime Minister's Office. "If the tradition in the Liberal Party of switching alternatively from an English-speaking to a French-speaking leader

²²⁶ John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson 1949-1972*, (Toronto: Vintage Books Canada Edition, 1992), 196.

was to be continued,” Gordon posed, “it was the turn this time for an English-speaking Protestant to get the nod.”²²⁷ In their biography of C.D. Howe, Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn assert that Howe believed Pearson’s race and religion put the Liberal Party in better standing to win back votes they lost from English-speaking voters. They contend that “Howe partially shared Jimmy Gardiner’s perception that the Liberals had lost a lot of ground in 1957 because English-speaking voters believed that French-Canadian influence was far too great in Ottawa.”²²⁸ On top of the question of electability, “Howe believed it was not the time to break the Liberal party’s tradition of alternating between French and English leaders.”²²⁹ The question of ethnicity versus electoral success is a reality of Canada’s political system. In comparison to American politics, this reality receives little attention in the historiography. But Canadian politicians were just as conscious of the pros and cons of various ethnicities, while attempting to win in the political arena.

In an interview with Peter Stursberg, Paul Martin revealed that he knew full-well his race and religion would not be favourable in parts of English-speaking Canada:

And the facts of life as he revealed to me when we discussed this thing, particularly in the fall of 1957, were that Ontario in particular and the rest of Canada would not favour as successor to St. Laurent someone who was French or part French, and Catholic, and who came from Ontario.²³⁰

Martin also admitted that, to his and Pearson’s disappointment, alternance was a party principle. A young Jean Chrétien, who later challenged alternance himself in the 1984 leadership race, agreed with Martin.

²²⁷ Gordon, *A Political Memoir*, 73.

²²⁸ Bothwell and Kilbourn, *C.D. Howe*, 336.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Peter Stursberg, *Lester Pearson and the dream of unity*, (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1978), 46.

The Canadian press debated the alternance issue during the Convention. The *Globe and Mail* reported a day before the opening of the Convention that Paul Martin was going head-on against the Liberal tradition of alternance:

Mr. Martin's backers on the other hand, realizing he faces the challenge of tradition that alternates the Liberal leadership between an English-speaking Protestant and a French-speaking Roman Catholic are promoting the argument that the party can show its political maturity by electing the best man regardless of religion.²³¹

The *Toronto Daily Star* said Martin believed alternance to be a fabricated tradition spread by Pearson supporters in Quebec.²³² Throughout the press the principle of alternance was suggested but it was not receiving any coverage that made Pearson's victory conclusive.

Pearson was able to successfully win the support of delegates in Quebec, who were open to transferring the Party leadership to an anglophone. Delegates from that province overwhelmingly supported Pearson because Martin seemed to have little to no chance of winning, and Jean Lesage, Pearson's former parliamentary assistant, brought the majority of the Quebec delegates over to Pearson's side. The *Chronicle Herald* reported that "the Quebec delegation, which holds about one-quarter of the voting strength, met in caucus and indicated a strong 4-1 backing for [Pearson]."²³³ Martin was stonewalled by the challenge of having no firm identity, noting in his memoirs that "in certain Liberal eyes, I was not regarded in Quebec as a true French Canadian; ironically, elsewhere I was not thought of as anything else."²³⁴ Quebec delegates admitted gracefully that it was now the turn of an English-speaking Protestant to win back government: Pearson.

²³¹ Clark Davey, "Pearson No Shoo-In; His Camp Is Worried," *Globe and Mail*, 13 January 1958, page 11.

²³² MacDonald, "Liberal Race Gets Hot," *Toronto Daily Star*, 11 January 1958, page 5.

²³³ Canadian Press, "Votes Lead Lengthened By Pearson," *Chronicle Herald*, 15 January 1958, 1.

²³⁴ Martin, *A Very Public Life Volume II*, 313.

Despite *Le Devoir* welcoming Pearson's election as Liberal leader with the headline "La loi de l'alternance a triomphe dans les deux groupes ethniques,"²³⁵ alternance did no more than describe the results. Pearson was elected leader of the Liberal Party because he was the best chance for the Liberals to defeat John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives. Although it was followed, tradition was not the driving force behind Pearson's victory as it would be for Trudeau in 1968.

For the Good of the Party and Each Other

The circumstances in 1958 were significantly different for the Liberal Party than they were in 1958. Nonetheless, King's Liberal Party was fresh from re-election while St Laurent's was just defeated. Unlike King, St Laurent did not intervene in the race for his successor. There is no discussion in the historiography, memoirs or media reports about rules or any sort of parameters St Laurent put in place to influence the outcome. St Laurent was withdrawn and provided little oversight. The party survived the contest because of Pearson and Martin's passion for the Liberal Party.

Martin made the choice of Pearson unanimous at the end of the 1958 Convention. "We had 'stood side by side in parliament and abroad in the United Nations, and we will stand together again,'" Martin said to the delegates.²³⁶ Pearson and Martin enhanced their friendship through mutual respect and goals. "[Martin] was naturally disappointed," Pearson wrote in his memoirs, "and I could not help but share some of his disappointment because I knew how he

²³⁵ Clément Brown, "La loi de l'alternance a triomphe dans les deux groupes ethniques," *Le Devoir*, 17 January 1958, page 1.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 316.

felt, and he was a friend.”²³⁷ Although it was not a seamless transition, Pearson sought to work effectively with Martin. “He was also a trouper in the political arena,” Pearson stated, “and became my right-hand man, the indispensable party tactician in the House of Commons.”²³⁸ Pearson appointed Martin the Secretary of State for External Affairs when the Liberals formed the government in 1963, giving Martin the posting he always wanted. Martin’s son, Paul Martin Jr., remembers Pearson’s friendship with his father fondly. “For his part, once he became leader, Mr. Pearson continued to treat my father with the utmost respect and friendship, and my father was happy to reciprocate.”²³⁹

Martin remained a source of encouragement for Pearson. On 31 March 1958 when it became clear Diefenbaker’s Progressive Conservatives had won the largest majority government in Canadian history up to that time, Martin spoke with Pearson on the phone. “After my victory parade around the riding, I spoke to him on the phone about midnight,” Martin recounted. Pearson “was downcast. Blaming himself, he rashly suggested that he ought to stand down as leader. I firmly discouraged him. It was not the last time he was to discuss such a course with me.”²⁴⁰ Martin’s memoir, like any other, is to a degree, self serving. However his choice to support Pearson in an hour of failure is commendable. A lesser man motivated purely by self-interest would have relished that moment, but not Paul Martin.

Conclusion

²³⁷ Pearson, *Mike*, volume 3, 29.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Martin, *Hell or High Water*, 30.

²⁴⁰ Martin, *A Very Public Life Volume II*,

“I’ll let you in on a little secret,” Martin told the delegates, “I voted for Mike.” The convention delegates applauded as Martin moved to make the leadership vote unanimous. “And I’ll let you in on another secret. Mike voted for me.”²⁴¹ Louis St Laurent was relieved of his duties as leader of the Liberal Party and Lester Pearson became the new leader of the Official Opposition. Martin was on side, giving full support to Pearson and the party. The 1958 National Liberal Leadership Convention closed with the singing of “O’Canada” and “God Save the Queen.”²⁴²

There was consensus within the Canadian media that Lester Pearson had been the front-runner in the Liberal leadership race before the delegates even arrived in Ottawa. As a result of Pearson’s projected victory, Paul Martin assumed the role of underdog in the race, a label he readily accepted and worked into his stump speeches. It was also a statement of fact. Delegates from every province supported Pearson in an overwhelming margin.

The 1958 Convention also included media reports on Maryon Pearson and Eleanor Martin. Depictions of the candidates’ wives were used to portray the different personalities and interests of Lester Pearson and Paul Martin. The coverage of Mrs. Pearson and Mrs. Martin also reflected a transition in the discussion of party leadership towards personality, and away from the traditional discussion of where the Liberals would go under new political leadership.

The 1958 Convention saw both traditional and new leadership campaign tactics. Pearson wanted the leadership as much as Martin, and he campaigned hard to win it. The core difference between the two was their portrayal in the media. Journalists depicted Pearson as the reluctant

²⁴¹ Paul Martin, Coliseum, Ottawa, January 16 1948.

²⁴² Ibid, 255.

candidate who had the office thrust upon him, while depicting Martin as the candidate who craved the leadership and would do just about anything to win it.

Alternance became a part of Liberal Party doctrine at the conclusion of the 1958 Convention. With the selection of Pearson, Liberals had alternated between French and English leaders four consecutive times over seven decades. After gracefully handing the Liberal Party reigns to an English Canadian in 1958, Quebec Liberals would expect the act to be reciprocated. The election of Pearson as party leader is partially explained by the geographical makeup of Liberal strength following their loss in the 1957 general election. As English remarked, the Liberals needed an English-speaking, preferably Protestant, leader to win back lost seats in the English-speaking, Protestant areas of Ontario and the Maritimes.

The passion both Pearson and Martin shared for the Liberal Party surmounted their desire to lead it. Both contenders put the organization before their ambitions. Pearson recognized Martin's value with the party and exploited his talents after 1957. Martin could have resisted Pearson's victory and divided the Liberal Party into separate factions, but he did not. In the end Pearson and Martin remained committed to their common cause, working together for the good of the party and the country.

Pearson's victory also adheres to what Courtney says is the dominating influence of the parliamentary caucus at leadership conventions. The convention gave Pearson an overwhelming endorsement and there is evidence that it was spread all across the country, including Quebec. The influence of key Liberals such as Howe, Sinclair, Pickersgill and Lesage proved invaluable to Pearson's victory.

During Pearson's tenure as Liberal leader, the caucus redefined who was and was not a Liberal. The ambition of aspiring leadership candidates to take over the reins from Pearson usurped the kind of devotion that Pearson and Martin had for the Liberal Party. The next time Liberals met to select a leader it produced the most advanced, competitive, fierce and bitter National Liberal Leadership Convention to that time.

1958 was the last time a runner-up left a Liberal leadership convention articulating complete support and loyalty for his victorious opponent. In turn, Pearson, the new leader, extended an olive branch of friendship and respect to his opponent. These two men had every intention to work together, and their mutual passion for the Liberal Party kept it intact over the following decade.

CHAPTER FOUR
**THE BEGINNING OF THE LEADERSHIP WARS: THE 1968 NATIONAL LIBERAL
LEADERSHIP CONVENTION**

I'm going to do something which is not usual. I'm going to congratulate the losers in this contest for the fight that they put up. Perhaps I may be pardoned if I single out one who was fighting the battles of liberalism, security and freedom in parliament before some who are here as delegates today were born. Paul Martin, who battled in this campaign from the beginning and who withdrew with gallantry and chivalry.

-- SNIPStorCanada, "1968 Liberal Convention - Pearson Retires,
Hands Government to Trudeau."²⁴³

The 1968 National Liberal Leadership Convention concluded with Lester B. Pearson's remarks. Although it was customary for the retiring leader to close the conventions, Pearson's words symbolize a camaraderie the Liberal Party would spend years trying to recapture.

"Who said Canadian politics are dull?" the *Chronicle Herald* asked rhetorically in April 1968.²⁴⁴ For the first time since 1919 the Liberal leadership vote moved beyond the first ballot and culminated in a razor-thin victory for Pierre Elliott Trudeau on the fourth. Unlike previous Liberal leadership conventions, this one did not meet to discuss policy resolutions. Its sole purpose was the election of a new leader. It convened from 4-6 April 1968 at the new Ottawa Civic Centre in midtown Landsdowne Park,²⁴⁵ with a field of experienced and well-qualified

²⁴³ YouTube Web site, 8:31, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Nti37CzN5c> (accessed February 14 2012).

²⁴⁴ Eric Dennis, "Post-Convention Wounds Likely," *Chronicle Herald*, 1 April 1968, 2.

²⁴⁵ Canadian Press, "Ottawa girds for 'invasion,'" *Montreal Star*, 28 March 1968, 39.

candidates: Trudeau, Paul Martin, Robert Winters,²⁴⁶ Paul Hellyer,²⁴⁷ John Turner,²⁴⁸ Joe Greene,²⁴⁹ Allan MacEachen,²⁵⁰ Eric Kierens,²⁵¹ and Mitchell Sharp.²⁵² (Reverend Lloyd Henderson once again ran an inconsequential campaign.) The number of quality contenders and the tactics they utilized to win represented a serious change from the 1948 and 1958 Conventions.

The 1968 Convention was the first multi-ballot leadership race in the Liberal Party since 1919. Sullivan says that at the convention's outset, Trudeau's campaign team detected a surge of support for both Turner and Winters.²⁵³ Nevertheless, Trudeau was aided by Sharp who dropped out of the race and endorsed Trudeau before proceedings began. English writes that Hellyer's speech to the Convention cost him delegate support.²⁵⁴ After the third ballot Green dropped out and supported Trudeau, Hellyer dropped out and supported Winters, while Turner refused to leave the race. On the fourth and final ballot, Trudeau won the Liberal leadership with 1,203 votes or 50.8 per cent of the vote, compared to Winters's 954 or 40.3 per cent, and Turner's 195 or 8.2 per cent.

²⁴⁶ Member of Parliament for York West. Winters resigned as Minister of Trade and Commerce in March 1968 when he declared as a leadership candidate.

²⁴⁷ Member of Parliament for Trinity and Minister of National Defence.

²⁴⁸ Member of Parliament for St. Lawrence--St. George and Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

²⁴⁹ Member of Parliament for Renfrew South and Minister of Agriculture.

²⁵⁰ Member of Parliament for Inerness--Richmond and Minister of National Health and Welfare.

²⁵¹ Member of National Assembly of Quebec for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and former President of the Quebec Liberal Party.

²⁵² Member of Parliament for Eglinton and Minister of Finance.

²⁵³ Sullivan, *Mandate 68*, 351.

²⁵⁴ English, *Citizen of the World*, 476.

This analysis of the 1968 convention focuses on the proceedings, media coverage and the experience of participants, detailing the public assessments “in real time.” It is supported by range of primary materials such as memoirs, newspaper and magazine sources in both French and English, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio and television archives, as well as archival materials. It also builds upon the historiography of the convention, which includes a plethora of biographic works focusing on Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the eventual winner, as well as Pearson, John Turner, Jean Chrétien, and Eric Kierans. Other works focus entirely on the Liberal Party such as Martin Sullivan’s *Mandate 68*, Joseph Wearing’s *The L-Shaped Party*, Christina McCall’s *Grits: An Intimate Portrait of the Liberal Party* and Stephen Clarkson’s *The Big Red Machine: How the Liberal Party Dominates Canadian Politics*, as well as general histories of the period such as Peter Newman’s *The Distemper of Our Times: Canadian Politics in Transition, 1963-1968*. These studies offer both a broad and detailed understanding of the 1968 Convention, disputing both facts and motivations of the candidate. Debate surrounding Trudeau’s interest in the Liberal leadership prior to his declaration is explored in significant detail.

The days of prominent Liberals putting the good of the Liberal Party ahead of their own political ambitions were gone. The ability for serious leadership contenders to step aside gracefully without long-lasting resentment, as Jimmy Gardiner and Paul Martin had done, proved difficult. The lines drawn between leadership candidates posed a far greater threat to the unity of the Liberal Party, spawning opposing Liberal factions that would remain long after the leader was selected.

This chapter explores six dominant themes. The first section associates Trudeau’s successful candidacy with the doctrine of alternance. The second explores the inability of the

media and pundits to guess with near-assurance the winner of the leadership race. The third focuses on campaign tactics, the intensity of the race, and how stakes were defined. The fourth assesses speculation about backroom deals, comparing media coverage with archival documents and memoirs. The fifth section explores the explosive debates and intra-party disputes over the Liberal Party's policy towards national unity with specific emphasis on Quebec. It addresses the importance of the debate among the candidates as well as the carelessness many leadership candidates employed to try to benefit from the issue. The sixth section explores the narrative of the balloting, describing how tensions came to a head with some Liberals opting to quietly step out of the race while others refused to let go of their leadership ambitions.

Francophone or Anglophone? *Alternance* and the 1968 Convention

By the time of the 1968 Convention, *alternance* had become an indoctrinated component of Liberal leadership criteria. After Pearson's announced resignation, the media considered Paul Martin, the only French-speaking candidate known to be in the race, the front-runner. Martin's status was far less certain after the entry of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. *Alternance* was not a factor in the media's presentation of the 1968 Convention to Canadians, but it was an internal factor in the leadership race. This section considers two patterns associated with *alternance*. First, it addresses the low level of notoriety *alternance* received in the Canadian press. Second, it emphasizes the importance of *alternance* among active Liberals.

On 29 March 1968 the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record's* Ben Ward reported that *alternance*, if followed, meant the next Liberal leader would be Martin or Trudeau.²⁵⁵ *Alternance*, however,

²⁵⁵ Ben Ward, "If Tradition Is Followed, It's Martin or Trudeau," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 29 March 1968, page 6.

received no other significant media coverage – even though influential Liberals recognized the principle. For example, the retiring Pearson believed that his successor should be a Francophone and the former diplomat spoke candidly on that conviction, even though he refused to publicly support a particular candidate. Pearson remarked in his memoirs that “[t]his was the tradition of our party; this had been our advantage through the years in a party political sense over the Conservative party: we could always find good men to lead our party in Quebec, and they never could.”²⁵⁶ Jack Cahill alleges that Pearson met with Marchand and Trudeau on the evening of his resignation about alternance: finding a strong French-Canadian candidate to succeed him.²⁵⁷

In *Mandate '68* Sullivan asserts that Pearson wanted Trudeau to succeed him all along, contending that Pearson subtly discouraged Marchand from running in hopes of getting him to support a Trudeau candidacy with his influence in Quebec.²⁵⁸ Radwanski, English and Litt all dispute Sullivan’s assertion. Radwanski observes that Pearson gave Marchand time to consider the offer and approached Trudeau once Marchand decided not to run for leader: “In mid-January, after Trudeau had returned from a two-week holiday in Tahiti... Pearson called him and Marchand into his office, stressed to him that Marchand had definitely decided not to run, and told him that he was the only possible French candidate.”²⁵⁹ English notes that Pearson was worried about Martin’s candidacy and wanted Marchand to be the Quebec candidate: “Pearson hoped for a strong Quebec candidate -- Marchand was his favourite--and he worried about Paul Martin Sr., the external affairs minister, who he believed belonged too much to the Liberal past at

²⁵⁶ Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, volume 3. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 325.

²⁵⁷ Jack Cahill, *John Turner: The Long Run*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 20.

²⁵⁸ Sullivan, *Mandate 68*, 273-274.

²⁵⁹ Radwanski, Trudeau, 99.

a time when new voices were essential.”²⁶⁰ Similarly, Litt asserts that only after Marchand declined to run did Trudeau become the logical candidate from Quebec.²⁶¹

Other prominent Liberals also sought a French-Canadian Party leader. Walter Gordon contends in his memoirs that Jean Marchand, Trudeau, and himself among others, wanted a French-Canadian to succeed Pearson.²⁶² As well, Judy LaMarsh asserts in her memoirs that she thought it likely the Liberal Party would continue its tradition and select a French-Canadian leader.²⁶³ Even Paul Martin was open to embracing alternance in 1968. Former Liberal MP Eugene Whelan asserts that Martin suggested to him that if he were elected leader, the principle of alternance would be continued in the Liberal Party.²⁶⁴ Martin’s changed position on alternance demonstrates that it was a factor for members of the Liberal Party. Moreover it demonstrates Martin’s willingness to change his position on the issue in order to capitalize on it. Others, such as Chrétien, opposed the doctrine of alternance and openly supported Sharp.²⁶⁵

Given the doctrine of alternance, Martin was considered the man to beat in the weeks following Pearson’s resignation. Alternance also explains the meteoric rise of the campaign to elect Trudeau after he entered the race in February 1968. The preference for Trudeau over Martin also speaks to Martin’s dual cultural identity. Although a Francophone’s victory was far from assured, their immediate rise in the polls suggests they both embodied qualities to which delegates were immediately drawn. The prevalence with which alternance is discussed in the

²⁶⁰ English, *Citizen of the World*, 446.

²⁶¹ Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 78.

²⁶² Walter Gordon, *A Political Memoir*, (London: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 297.

²⁶³ Judy LaMarsh, *Memoirs of a bird in a gilded cage*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), 312.

²⁶⁴ Eugene Whelan with Rick Archbold, *Whelan: the Man in Green Stetson*, (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1986), 112.

²⁶⁵ Lawrence, Chrétien Volume 1, 185.

memoirs of Liberals, especially the strong feelings embodied by the outgoing Prime Minister, qualifies the doctrine as a substantial factor. The importance of the Quebec issue made it essential for a Francophone victory in order to ensure credibility in the province.

No Definitive Choice

The 1968 Convention was neck and neck race for the Liberal leadership between a field of solid contenders. In popular historical discourse Pierre Trudeau is often associated with an exciting performance surrounded by an aura of “Trudeaumania” against which no political opponent could compete. Although Trudeau stood in front of the pack of the 1968 leadership race, his ability to win the contest was far from certain. The race was too complex to predict. Trudeau’s opponents perceived him as a legitimate contender, but still believed they could win. Furthermore, an examination of media reports swirling around the 1968 Convention demonstrates that Trudeau’s leadership campaign lacked the feeling of certain victory associated with the campaigns of St Laurent in 1948 and Pearson in 1958.

Nevertheless, Trudeau’s entrance into the 1968 leadership campaign changed the outlook of the race. An early poll conducted at the end of January 1968, before Trudeau’s official announcement, gave him just 2 per cent support nationally among Canadian voters.²⁶⁶ In a poll conducted over the second and third week of March 1968, Trudeau’s support had risen to 26 per cent.²⁶⁷ In their memoirs, Kierans, Chrétien, Martin Jr., and Davey document Trudeau’s impact on the race. Kierans suggested that Trudeau’s victory was pre-destined. Others emphasize how difficult his path to victory really was.

²⁶⁶ Peter Regenstreif, “Martin, Trudeau lead,” *Montreal Star*, 29 March 1968, page 9.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Kierans remembers the 1968 Convention as a coronation of sorts for Trudeau. “I was the first one into the race,” Kierans writes, “which turned out in the end to be no race at all, but a waltz to coronation for Pierre Elliott Trudeau, then federal minister of justice as well as the leader of the Three Wise Men from Quebec.”²⁶⁸ Kierans’s status as a Liberal outsider affected his standing in the leadership race. Peter C. Newman notes that Kierans set out to meet all 2,500 Liberal delegates across the country. He faced an uphill contest because of his relative obscurity within the Liberal Party outside of Quebec.²⁶⁹ Consequently, Kierans is nearly alone in addressing Trudeau as the certain victor.

The Trudeau campaign gained a surge of momentum. “Even by March it had become clear that Trudeau was the man to beat,” Pearson reminisces, “and that this could be done only if all the anti-Trudeau forces united behind one candidate. This they did not and could not do, right up until the last ballot on Saturday.”²⁷⁰ Martin Jr. compares the rise of Trudeau with the fall of Martin, the original front-runner. “It was about a change of generations; it was about sweeping out the old with the charisma of the new,” he remembered. “Suddenly, all my father’s advantages - his seniority, his experience, his diligent working of the party over decades - were disadvantages, as Liberals were mesmerized with the novelty and promise of Trudeau’s candidacy.”²⁷¹ Chrétien echoed Martin Jr.’s interpretations and credits Sharp’s endorsement as significant for Trudeau. “In the end, Sharp’s move was an important factor in Trudeau’s victory,” Chrétien explained, “because the race against Winters was close, and Trudeau was helped by

²⁶⁸ Eric Kierans with Walter Stewart, *Remembering*, (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd., 2001), 138.

²⁶⁹ Peter C. Newman, *The Distemper of Our Times: Canadian politics in transition, 1963-1968*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968).

²⁷⁰ Pearson, *Mike*, volume 3, 330.

²⁷¹ Paul Martin, *Hell or High Water: My Life In and Out of Politics*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2008), 70.

being seen to have momentum.”²⁷² Chrétien’s memory of the 1968 Convention is a far more accurate analysis. Although Trudeau was running a successful campaign going into the Convention, victory was far from certain. Last minute momentum was essential.

Reporter Michael Cassidy suggested the race was tight as the Convention drew near. “A month ago most observers here thought a Trudeau win was inevitable,” said Cassidy. “Now, though Trudeau is still conceded the first ballot lead, there is no consensus on who will win or where they will draw second-choice support to put them over the top.”²⁷³ Most media reports viewed Trudeau as a serious leadership contender but not the certain victor. The media’s analysis and predictions lacked the near certainty with which they had covered both the 1948 and 1958 Conventions. The coverage included opinion polls of Canadian voters, and reports indicating that half of the Liberal delegates did not support a particular leadership candidate prior to the opening of the Convention.

The media’s predictions ahead of the convention were consistent: Trudeau will win the first ballot but the election is anyone’s to win. However, Hellyer’s emergence as a serious challenger to Trudeau was becoming apparent, surging past Martin’s expectations in the press. On 1 April 1968 the *Financial Times* reported that they believed Trudeau had the potential to continually build support on each ballot until he eventually would win the Liberal leadership.²⁷⁴ This scenario, although predicted in other media reports, demonstrates the difficult nature of a Trudeau victory at the 1968 Convention. The *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* reported on 3 April

²⁷² Jean Chrétien, *Straight from the Heart*, (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1985), 61.

²⁷³ Michael Cassidy, “Half the delegates uncommitted in the stretch,” *Financial Times*, 1 April 1968.

²⁷⁴ Michael Cassidy, “Half the delegates uncommitted in the stretch,” *Financial Times*, 1 April 1968.

1968 that the potential winners could be narrowed down to five.²⁷⁵ On 4 April 1967 the *Montreal Star* reported that Hellyer was turning into a serious contender. “The race for the Liberal leadership showed every sign of developing into a tight Trudeau-Hellyer battle as the party convention got under way today.”²⁷⁶ Similarly, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that Hellyer stood the best chance to stop Trudeau.²⁷⁷ Hellyer, however, lacked the ability to manage large groups of delegates.²⁷⁸ Accordingly, no one in the media could credibly predict who would win on a multiple ballot vote. In reality the media had just as little indication of who would survive beyond the first ballot as they knew where the free delegates would go. A report from S.A. Williams Consulting informed the Hellyer campaign that the leadership race was a contest among Trudeau, Martin, Hellyer and Sharp in no particular order or rank.²⁷⁹ Williams predicted that there would be six ballots and either Trudeau, Martin or Hellyer would be successful. Although the memo provided no strategic benefit, it corroborates the uncertainty portrayed in the media reports.

Media reports also predicted Trudeau would win a majority of delegates from major urban centres. The *Montreal Star* and the *Toronto Daily Star* both presented findings from a Gallup Poll targeting Canadian voters and not Liberal delegates. In the poll voters were not given names to select but instead were requested to select them on their own. Trudeau was selected 32

²⁷⁵ “Picking a Prime Minister,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 3 April 1968.

²⁷⁶ W.A. Wilson, “Leadership race developing into Trudeau-Hellyer battle,” *Montreal Star*, 4 April 1968, page 1.

²⁷⁷ Victor Mackie, “Hellyer, Martin In Runner-Up Tilt,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 4 April 1968, page 1.

²⁷⁸ Cahill, *John Turner*, 14; Newman, *The Distemper of Our Times*, 396.

²⁷⁹ MG 32 B 33, Paul Hellyer fonds, volume 29, file 1 - Political Leadership Convention 1968, “Letter from Sydney Williams to Paul Hellyer,” March 23, 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

per cent of the time followed by Martin 14 per cent of the time.²⁸⁰ There is a clear absence of information backing up the intentions of Liberal delegates. At this point in the race the intentions of voters were a secondary factor far removed from the concerns of Liberal delegates looking for the leader that could best represent “their” Liberal Party.

Prior to the opening of the 1968 Convention reports began to surface suggesting that a large number delegates were not committed to any of the leadership candidates. The *Financial Times* reported on 1 April 1968 that half the delegates were uncommitted while reports in the *Montreal Star* suggested that a third of the delegates were uncommitted.²⁸¹ A 28 March report from the Hellyer campaign suggested that 910 delegates remained uncommitted going into the convention.²⁸² The Hellyer team also remained confident about their Toronto delegates. They estimated that they had 60 of the 183 delegates, to Trudeau’s 36, Winters 28, Sharp’s 16, Turner’s 11, MacEachen’s 2, and Greene’s 1, with the remaining 29 undecided or unknown.²⁸³ Of course some delegates were uncomfortable publicizing their leadership choice. The opportunity to attend various campaign hospitality suites, breakfasts or other events also gave delegates a vested interest in remaining neutral. Reports in the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* even suggested that some delegates had promised their vote to multiple campaigns.²⁸⁴ The prospect of multiple

²⁸⁰ Gallup Poll, “Urban voters strong in supporting Trudeau,” *Montreal Star*, 3 April 1968, 19; Gallup Poll, “Poll Says Big Cities Will Go For Trudeau,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 April 1968, page 8.

²⁸¹ Cassidy, “Half the delegates uncommitted in the stretch,” *Financial Times*, 1 April 1968; Wilson, “Leadership race developing into Trudeau-Hellyer battle,” *Montreal Star*, 4 April 1968, page 1.

²⁸² MG 32 B 33, Paul Hellyer fonds, volume 29, file 1 - Political Leadership Convention 1968, “Confidential Delegates Report,” March 28, 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸³ MG 32 B 33, Paul Hellyer fonds, volume 29, file 7 - Political Leadership Convention 1968, “Bulletin: More Good News,” March 14, 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁸⁴ “Phones Bugged, Candidates Claim,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 6 April 1968, page 1.

ballots, with second, third, and even fourth preferences for delegates, complicated matters even further.

In his biography of Trudeau, historian John English remarks that “[Trudeau] ran for office among the finest group of politicians ever to contest a party leadership in Canada, and he stood out above them all.”²⁸⁵ The Liberal political heavyweights sought the top job, including Robert Winters, another fiscally-conservative Liberal who joined the race late in March. Journalists Jack Cahill and Martin Lawrence suggested that Winters immediately took away support from the other leadership candidates,²⁸⁶ in particular Finance Minister Mitchell Sharp who had enjoyed the support of the business community.²⁸⁷ Sharp was considered a serious candidate for the leadership until the failure of his tax bill almost caused a snap election. Pearson’s efforts were able to stem the opposition from bringing down the government but Sharp’s reputation was tarnished significantly. Nevertheless, Winters was unable to capture enough of the delegates to win the leadership. Newman argues that Winters’s hesitancy to enter the race until early March, well after his opponents, cost him the leadership. Consequently, Winters was well behind in the race to capture delegates who had decided to support other candidates after Winters initially said that he did not intend to run.²⁸⁸ In the end, Winters managed to finish second after just one month of active campaigning.

²⁸⁵ John English, *Citizen of the World The Life of Pierre Elliott Trudeau Volume One: 1919-1968*, (Toronto: Vintage Canada Edition, 2007), 471.

²⁸⁶ Cahill, *John Turner*, 22. Lawrence Martin, *Chrétien Volume 1: The Will to Win*, (Toronto: Lester Publishing Limited, 1995), 184.

²⁸⁷ Martin, *Chrétien Volume 1*, 184; Eric Dennis, “Some Sharp Backers Switch To Winters,” *Chronicle Herald*, 4 April 1968.

²⁸⁸ Newman, *The Distemper of Our Times*, 399.

Before the candidacy of Pierre Trudeau was confirmed it looked as though Paul Martin would finally become leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister of Canada. Newman notes that Martin had considerable amounts of money to spend, delegate support across Canada, and was leading in both private and public opinion polls immediately following Pearson's resignation.²⁸⁹ In the end, it was not to be. Martin's dual cultural identity continued to serve as a barrier to his leadership prospects. Pearson did not regard Martin as a francophone and believed Liberals felt the same.²⁹⁰ Both Cahill and English suggest that when Trudeau entered the race Martin's chances ended.²⁹¹ Regardless, public opinion polls presented in March (but taken in early February) had Martin in the lead with Trudeau (undeclared at the time of the polls) in a close second.²⁹²

The last serious contender was a young John Turner. Newman notes that the leadership race allowed Turner to come of age.²⁹³ Nevertheless, biographer Paul Litt notes that Turner could not move past the Trudeau campaign in the weeks leading up to the convention.²⁹⁴ Turner's campaign message of youth and rejuvenation was drowned out and absorbed by the Trudeau campaign.²⁹⁵ Although Turner retained much of his base support during the convention, his potential for growth was severely limited by Trudeau. Young Liberals remained vibrant Turner

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 398.

²⁹⁰ John English, *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson 1949-1972*, (Toronto: Vintage Books Canada Edition, 1992), 381.

²⁹¹ Cahill, *John Turner*, 22; English, *Citizen of the World*, 469.

²⁹² English, *Citizen of the World*, 469.

²⁹³ Newman, *The Distemper of Our Times*, 397.

²⁹⁴ Paul Litt, *Elusive Destiny: The Political Vocation of John Napier Turner*, (Toronto: UBC Press, 2011), 82.

²⁹⁵ Cahill, *John Turner*, 22-23.

supporters. “Turner retained the support of most Young Liberals,” Litt observes, “because they had already committed to him, but his potential for growth was gravely curtailed.”²⁹⁶

Trudeau entered the leadership race in February after serious deliberation. Trudeau’s decision believed that Jean Marchand should have been the francophone candidate,²⁹⁷ but Marchand recognized that his English was not strong enough and suggested to Pearson that Trudeau seek the job. Pearson agreed. Martin Sullivan, George Radwanski, Christina McCall, and John English all assert that Trudeau was hesitant to run for the leadership,²⁹⁸ and that his long delay in committing himself as a candidate had to do with his legislative agenda as Minister of Justice. Trudeau believed that if he were a formal candidate, his controversial amendments to the criminal code and his constitutional negotiations with the provinces would be regarded as disingenuous.²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Trudeau’s closest friends ensured that Trudeau was in good standing for a leadership race. Marc Lalonde convinced Pearson to send Trudeau on a cross-Canada tour to meet with the provincial premiers in advance of the federal-provincial constitutional conference.³⁰⁰ Trudeau’s popularity among Liberals and voters only rose as he refused to commit himself to the leadership.

Trudeau was elected Liberal Party leader after four ballots. Although many public opinion polls demonstrated that the general public viewed Trudeau favourably, his support

²⁹⁶ Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 80.

²⁹⁷ Member of Parliament for Quebec West until the riding was abolished in 1968. He then served as MP for Langeller.

²⁹⁸ Martin Sullivan, *Mandate 68*, (Toronto: Doubleday, 1968), 286; George Radwanski, *Trudeau*, (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1978), 98; Christina McCall-Newman, *Grits: An Intimate Portrait of The Liberal Party*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), 106; English, *The Worldly Years*, 382.

²⁹⁹ Radwanski, *Trudeau*, 98; English, *Citizen of the World*, 449.

³⁰⁰ Lalonde was an advisor to Prime Minister Lester Pearson; Radwanski, *Trudeau*, 100; English, *Citizen of the World*, 450-452.

among Liberals was never certain. Even on the fourth ballot Trudeau's margin of victory over his opponents Winters and Turner was thin. The race was too complex to predict with certainty, as some delegates refused to commit themselves and others ended up voting for their fourth choice on the fourth ballot. Trudeau's popularity with the general public may have allowed him to charge admission to his public events, but the average Liberal was divided over who should replace Pearson.³⁰¹ Trudeau's campaign lacked the definitive victory that past Liberal leaders, such as Mackenzie King, believed to be so important. Ultimately, persistent divisions within the Liberal Party developed at the 1968 Convention and threatened intra-party unity.

How to Win: Convention Tactics

In 1968 contenders used a pool of new techniques that made the campaign a vicious five month process, and offered insight into the growing complexity of Liberal leadership contests. This complexity enhanced personal tension between the candidates. This section examines the convention itself, focusing on the techniques used in the final days of the leadership race. The techniques used to court Liberal delegates at the convention included candidate events, publications and campaign materials, floor demonstrations, and even dirty tricks. The tactics utilized at the 1968 convention inspired division and challenged notions of gentlemanly competition the Liberal Party had endured for multiple decades. The race for the Liberal leadership flared personal tensions between the candidates.

Each leadership candidate operated hospitality suites where delegates were invited to share free food and drink. According to the *Chronicle Herald*, twenty hospitality suites were

³⁰¹ Harold Greer, "Trudeau hits 'investment nationalism,'" *Montreal Star*, 30 March 1968, page 1, 2.

open in the major downtown Ottawa hotels,³⁰² paid for by the leadership candidates' campaigns. In his memoirs Kierans notes that Trudeau had eight hospitality suites but neglects to mention his own.³⁰³ Kierans's campaign actually operated five: two at the Chateau Laurier, and one at each of the Beacon Arms Hotel, Skyline Hotel and the Bruce Macdonald Motor Hotel.³⁰⁴ Each hospitality suite had a direct phone line to the Kierans campaign headquarters at the Beacon Arms Hotel and could be used by any delegate.³⁰⁵ Kierans's hospitality suites were instructed to keep alcohol service to a minimum by only serving during specific cocktail hours. At all other times the suites would serve coffee and croissants.³⁰⁶ Furthermore, Kierans's campaign provided entertainment for delegates during reception hours.³⁰⁷

Some hospitality suites were more fun than the others. The *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* reported that Turner's hospitality suites were fun, while Trudeau's were purely political and a source of pure excitement. The report claimed that because Trudeau's events were packed with delegates wanting to meet the prospective leader, the atmosphere was almost overwhelming.³⁰⁸ The events allowed Liberals to socialize and to a degree, reward committed delegates for their support. Candidates sought to meet delegates and gain or keep their support. For example, a report in the *Globe and Mail* highlights the fast-paced nature of campaigning in the Martin

³⁰² CP, "Candidates Head Into Home Stretch," *Chronicle Herald*, 3 April 1968, 3.

³⁰³ Kierans with Stewart, *Remembering*, 141-142.

³⁰⁴ MG 32 B 10, Eric Kierans fonds, volume 12, file 3 - Election Liberal Leadership 1968 - City Kits, "Memo to All Organizers," Library and Archives Canada.

³⁰⁵ MG 32 B 10, Eric Kierans fonds, volume 9, file 12 - Election Liberal Leadership 1968 - Background Material, "Memo to All Organizers," Library and Archives Canada.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ Desmond Bill, "Turner Bashes More Fun, Trudeau's Parties Purely Political," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 5 April 1968, page 1.

suites. “Mr. Martin bounced into his reception like a man without a care in the world,” John Dafoe reported. “He shook hands all around the room and then stood in the middle as the band played his campaign song, “Martin’s the Man,” and placard-bearing teenagers danced around him.”³⁰⁹

Leadership candidates communicated with both the media and Liberal delegates. They issued press releases to the 1,386 media representatives present at the Convention and littered the delegates with promotional materials such as brochures, buttons or sponsored newspapers.³¹⁰ For example, the Hellyer campaign released the *Liberal Convention News* to delegates prior to and during the Convention.³¹¹ Similarly, the Kierans campaign released the *Kierans’ Canada* publication for Liberal delegates.³¹² In addition each candidate had an information booth where delegates could find campaign materials and ask questions.³¹³ All told, Liberal delegates were given more personal attention than ever before from the leadership contenders. The 1958 contest that had revolved around finding ways to improve the handshake game of politics had evolved into a full-fledged, modern election of its own. The aggressive campaigning that took place only intensified the race, raised the stakes, and further divided Liberals over the candidates they preferred and the candidates they refused to support.

³⁰⁹ John Dafoe, “Martin shows footwork at hospitality room; says no deals made,” *Globe and Mail*, 4 April 1968, page 9.

³¹⁰ Kierans with Stewart, *Remembering*, 141-142; MG 28 IV 3, Liberal Party fonds, volume 1161, file - National Leadership Convention - Press, “Memo from Bobbie O’Neill to Ian Howard Regarding Report on media Representation at the Liberal Convention,” 10 April 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

³¹¹ MG 32 B 33, Paul Hellyer fonds, volume 35, file 11 - Political Leadership Convention - Press & Public Relations 1968, “*Liberal Convention News*,” Library and Archives Canada.

³¹² MG 32 B 10, Eric Kierans fonds, volume 12, file 3 - Elections Liberal Leadership 1968 City Kits, “*Kierans Canada*,” Library and Archives Canada.

³¹³ MG 28 IV 3, Liberal Party fonds, volume 1158, file - National Leadership Convention 1968 - Candidates Liaison Committee, “Candidates’ Liaison Committee Meeting No. 6,” 7 March 1968.

The Candidates' Liaison Committee meetings agreed that each leadership candidate would be allowed to utilize floor demonstrations at the Convention in addition to the candidates' speeches on 5 April 1968. All bands, signs, banners and other materials had to be removed from the Convention floor by the end of the demonstration. Staff was on hand to ensure demonstrations did not disrupt the speech or demonstration of another candidate.³¹⁴ Radwanski notes that, unlike his opponents, Trudeau believed that his campaign's demonstration should be spontaneous and vetoed plans to include marching girls or a band. The plan paid off:

That combination of sang-froid and theatrical instinct paid off handsomely: When the justice minister was called to the microphone Friday night, the Ottawa Civic Centre hall came electrifyingly alive with a great whoop of 'Trudeau!' from the audience and a sudden forest of Trudeau placards.³¹⁵

The point of demonstrations was to show the national press and unfriendly Liberal delegates that their candidate had the momentum to win.

The media also reported dirty tricks perpetrated by the leadership hopefuls and their campaign teams. For example, the Trudeau campaign alleged that Martin's team waged a mail-order smear campaign against Trudeau. "Most, if not all, of the Liberal party delegates who begin Thursday to choose a new party leader and prime minister of Canada," Ron Haggart reported, "have received mailed literature originating with the so-called Canadian Intelligence Service, operated by Ron Gostick of Flesherton, Ont."³¹⁶ An official from the Martin campaign denied the allegation. "We deplore this," Duncan Edmonds, campaign manager for Paul Martin

³¹⁴ MG 28 IV 3, Liberal Party fonds, volume 1158, file - National Leadership Convention 1968 - Candidates Liaison Committee, "Memo from Allan R. O'Brien to Candidates' Liaison Committee Regarding Rules and regulations applicable to candidates and their participation in the National Convention 1968 on matters falling within the jurisdiction of the Convention Organizing Committee," 12 March 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

³¹⁵ Radwanski, *Trudeau*, 105.

³¹⁶ Ron Haggart, "Martin office mail list aided smear: Trudeau men," *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 April 1968, page 9.

said. “We have not done this. Our mailing list was not used with our authority.”³¹⁷ The allegation itself indicated the cultural war brewing over the Party leadership. Another report in the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record* alleged that telephone lines were bugged but failed to provide any substantiating evidence. The report also alleged that Trudeau’s telephone lines were cut between his campaign headquarters and his office at the Chateau Laurier, and the Trudeau campaign wired all of their Convention floor stations with Bell telephone lines in fear that other candidates would jam walkie-talkie signals.³¹⁸ None of the memoirs or archival records corroborates these claims.

The age of winning delegates over in the days prior to convention voting was over. Raised stakes meant that candidates brought their message to the delegates’ doorsteps. The Convention itself had become an exercise in spreading messages the candidates had been pushing since January. The high stakes meant victory was the only goal for the contenders. Some candidates, or their supporters, would do so at just about any cost.

Liberals in the Smoke-filled Back Rooms

The large number of qualified candidates meant the majority would be forced to concede defeat and drop out of the balloting. Consequently the 1968 convention provided a more intense backdrop for Mackenzie King’s strategy before and during the 1948 convention: the back room deal. The *Toronto Daily Star* reported that the 1968 event forced the collision of two worlds. The first was the public world: what reporters and camera crews recorded for the general public. The second world is a far more secretive one: “the covert world of guarded corridors, locked doors,

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ “Phones Bugged, Candidates Claim,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 6 April 1968, page 1.

whispered telephone calls and secret deals.”³¹⁹ The aura of this second world was described like a scene from a movie. According to journalist Val Sears, “the concrete corridors and paperboard rooms of this smoky, backroom community may be where the real political action is.”³²⁰

The Hellyer campaign targeted Eric Kierans as a potential ally. Hellyer’s team believed they could acquire Kierans’s support (and that of many of his delegates) after he dropped from the race.³²¹ They believed that Kierans would also give Hellyer additional credibility in Quebec and more support from youth delegates.³²² In exchange, they would probably offer Kierans a Cabinet post, such as Trade and Commerce.³²³ As well, the Hellyer campaign realized that such a maneuver would elicit a potentially negative response from another candidate or from Kierans himself.³²⁴ Media reports and memoirs suggest that a potential deal never became public knowledge; after all, Kierans withdrew and refused to openly declare his support for another candidate.

Sharp withdrew from the race and supported Trudeau. On 3 April 1968, headlines, such as *Le Devoir*’s “On prête à Mitchell Sharp l'intention de se retirer et d'appuyer Trudeau,” appeared in newspapers across the country. Chrétien revealed that Sharp’s campaign hired a polling firm and determined that their support was too modest to make a serious attempt at the leadership. So Sharp became the first candidate to drop out of the race and endorse one of his

³¹⁹ Val Sears, “Locked doors, secret deals convention’s other world,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 3 April 1968, page 10.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ MG 32 B 33, Paul Hellyer fonds, volume 29, file 9 - Political Leadership Campaign Robert Andras 1968, “Memo to Hellyer Regarding Eric Kierans,” 28 March 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

former opponents.³²⁵ The next day Turner stood in front of reporters and decried Sharp's withdrawal as a back room deal.³²⁶ "This convention has to be fought on the floor," Turner told reporters, promising that his campaign would make no deals or arrangements.³²⁷ Turner also criticized Joey Smallwood's endorsement of Trudeau, alleging that these arrangements threatened the democratic nature of the convention.³²⁸ Martin Jr. recalls that Turner was furious.³²⁹

It is not clear that Sharp and Trudeau made any formal deal.³³⁰ The historiography suggests that Sharp's endorsement of Trudeau brought legitimacy to the Justice Minister's popular but uncertain campaign. Sullivan, Cahill, and Jamie Swift assert that Sharp's endorsement indeed legitimized Trudeau's candidacy in the minds of undecided Liberals.³³¹ Although Sharp's leadership candidacy had been threatened by his parliamentary failure, his endorsement brought the party establishment onside with Trudeau's candidacy. Early reports also indicated that Alan MacEachen was preparing to move to Trudeau in the event of a poor showing early in the balloting.³³²

The media disseminated rumours of an anti-Trudeau movement forming during the Convention. The *Globe and Mail* reported that such a movement would require a clear runner-up

³²⁵ Chrétien, *Straight from the Heart*, 61.

³²⁶ Martin, *A Very Public Life Volume II*, 627.

³²⁷ Sally Barnes, "Turner decries backroom 'deals,'" *Toronto Daily Star*, 4 April 1968, page 8.

³²⁸ "Sharp, Smallwood support Trudeau; Turner attacks backroom deals," *Globe and Mail*, 4 April 1968, page 1.

³²⁹ Martin, *Hell or High Water*, 70.

³³⁰ "Three decisions that could decide next Prime Minister," *Globe and Mail*, 4 April 1968, page 9; Peter C. Newman, "Mr. Sharp's rare act of courage," *Montreal Star*, 4 April 1968.

³³¹ Sullivan, *Mandate 68*, 331; Cahill, *John Turner*, 24; Jamie Swift, *Odd Man Out: The Life and Times of Eric Kierans*, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1988), 199.

³³² Geoffrey Stevens, "Deals in the making by Liberals," *Globe and Mail*, 3 April 1968, page 8.

to Trudeau to emerge on either the first or second ballot: “For example, Mr. Martin runs second, ahead of Mr. Hellyer, he would reasonably expect Mr. Hellyer to cast his lot with him. The reverse would apply if Mr. Hellyer ran ahead of Mr. Martin.”³³³ On 4 April 1968 reports began to circulate that the Martin campaign was keeping in touch with the Winters campaign about a stop-Trudeau movement.³³⁴ The *Globe and Mail* reported on 5 April 1968 that the two teams had met but were unable to come to terms.³³⁵ Martin corroborated this report in his memoirs.³³⁶ Similarly Agriculture Minister Joe Greene told the *Toronto Daily Star* that he was being offered deals by other candidates but refused to give names.³³⁷ Finally, the *Toronto Daily Star* broke a story suggesting a deal could not be reached to stop Trudeau: “Representatives of other major leadership candidates met late into the night and again this morning in an unsuccessful attempt to form an effective coalition to stop him.”³³⁸ Clearly, some leadership contenders were unwilling to concede victory to Trudeau, unable to push aside their ambition for the good of the Liberal Party.

The back room deal was the most compelling story in the press during the 1968 Convention. The speculation that for the first time since 1919 the Liberal Party leadership race would exceed the first ballot brought about back room politicking – and deep divisions within the party. The media’s fascination with the stop-Trudeau movement reflected murmurs coming

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Desmond Bill, “Pierre Foes May Rally to Winters,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 4 April 1968, page 1.

³³⁵ Anthony Westell, “Candidates fail to make decisive impact on delegates,” *Globe and Mail*, 5 April 1968, page 1.

³³⁶ Martin, *A Very Public Life Volume II*, 626.

³³⁷ Ron Lowman, “Greene says he’s being offered deals,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 4 April 1968, page 4.

³³⁸ Tom Hazlitt, “Foes trying again to come up with stop-Trudeau deal,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 April 1968, page 12.

out of various leadership campaigns. As candidates dropped off the balloting and crossed the floor, Liberal Party division was unavoidable.

Liberal Party Unity and National Unity

The most compelling policy debate that occurred during the race to succeed Pearson was over Quebec: how the federal government could combat the rising tide of separatism in the province. McCall, English, Radwanski, and Litt assert that Trudeau's performance at the Federal-Provincial Constitutional Conference in February 1968 cemented his candidacy in the eyes of Canadians and won him significant support in his leadership bid.³³⁹ Trudeau's views on federal-provincial relations were the official views of the Pearson Government. Consequently when Trudeau's leadership opponents questioned his approach to federal-provincial relations they also undermined party unity. By openly criticizing Trudeau's position they were also criticizing the prime minister they sought to replace.

Trudeau believed federalism was the Canadian way, and that no province deserved preferential treatment over another. Days before the opening of the 1968 convention, Trudeau delivered another speech on federalism with specific attention on the status of Quebec. "I would like to say first that in my view, federalism is not an expediency, not a compromise and even less a last resort," the *Montreal Star* reported him stating. "On the contrary, it is an avant-garde political formula that I would endorse even outside the Canadian context."³⁴⁰ Trudeau believed it was necessary for both sides of the argument to have clearly stated positions. In his view, two

³³⁹ McCall-Newman, *Grits*, 107; English, *The Worldly Years*, 382; English, *Citizen of the World*, 457; Radwanski, *Trudeau*, 100; Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 78.

³⁴⁰ Hubert Gendron, "Trudeau stands by federalism," *Montreal Star*, 3 April 1968, page 3.

options existed: the first held that Quebec and Canada are incompatible; the second insisted on the need to trust federalism to take its course.³⁴¹ In his speech to the Convention on 5 April 1968

Trudeau focused on his perceptions of federalism:

For many years, I have been writing and speaking in favour of a strong and clearly defined federalism. In the years after the war when many politicians and political writers were advocating the centralization of powers in Ottawa, I was urging the Province to exercise their responsibilities.

In recent years when some have demanded the transfer of essential powers from the Federal Government to one or more provinces, I have pointed out that this could destroy our federal system.

I have always maintained that our present constitution could be improved. In fact, I have recommended many revisions, such as a Charter of Human Rights, and changes in the Senate and the Supreme Court. I would agree to any transfer of jurisdiction which would allow us to be better and more efficiently governed. In my experience, what interests Canadians is good federal government and good provincial governments.³⁴²

As such Trudeau defined his views on federalism with clarity and challenged his opponents in the Liberal Party leadership race to do so as well. Moreover, Trudeau was encouraging a confrontational approach between the federal and provincial governments.³⁴³

The candidates' positions regarding national unity rose in importance as the leadership campaign progressed. MacEachen and Martin both flagged national unity as the most pressing issue facing federal politicians.³⁴⁴ Similarly, Sharp floated the idea of eliminating the monarchy in an attempt to stabilize national unity.³⁴⁵ Turner was far less subtle in his comments on the

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² MG 28 IV 3, Liberal Party fonds, volume 1056, file - National Leadership Convention 1968 - Trudeau Leadership Convention April, "Notes For A Speech By the Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau At the Liberal Convention Ottawa," 5 April 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁴³ Harold Greer, "Trudeau hits 'investment nationalism,'" *Montreal Star*, 30 March 1968, page 1, 2; "Trudeau says tension healthy for Canada," *Globe and Mail*, 1 April 1968, page 10; "Candidates Blitz Nation As Day of Decisions Nears," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 1 April 1968, page 32.

³⁴⁴ "No Rest for PM Hopefuls," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 28 March 1968; "Ottawa girds for 'invasion,'" *Montreal Star*, 28 March 1968, page 39.

³⁴⁵ "Sharp Says Dump Queen If She Threatens Unity," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 29 March 1968.

issue, criticizing his own government by suggesting that Trudeau's approach to Quebec was too tough.³⁴⁶ Similarly, Maurice Sauvé, a prominent supporter of Martin, challenged Trudeau's position as excessively theoretical and piped that Quebec required a solution of practical politics.³⁴⁷ Trudeau was hailed as the solution to national unity in *Le Devoir*, however, indicating that there was no consensus on the issue in Quebec.

On the opening day of the Convention the *Toronto Daily Star* reported that Turner, Winters, Hellyer, Martin and Kierans all preached a flexible approach to Quebec that preserved Canadian unity. These views challenged both Trudeau's and the government's position. Turner took a direct shot at Trudeau: "I believe you will never solve the problem of Canada by logic, by the mind or by the intellect alone--that you'll solve it by the heart and you'll solve it by the gut because that's what Canada is all about."³⁴⁸ Moreover, Turner chastized Trudeau for his hardline approach, suggesting that "the solution lies in negotiation and not in confrontation."³⁴⁹ Winters called for a new constitution based on "the growing recognition of the "French fact" in Canada and the 'indistinct jurisdictions' between the two main levels of government."³⁵⁰ In dealing with Quebec, Winters and Hellyer advocated appeasement.³⁵¹ Martin called for greater co-operation

³⁴⁶ "The course that takes guts," *Globe and Mail*, 28 March 1968, page 6; Dave MacIntosh, "Candidates Give Views on National Unity," *Chronicle Herald*, 5 April 1968, 34.

³⁴⁷ John Dafoe, "Ready to talk peace in Hanoi, Martin says," *Globe and Mail*, 28 March 1968, page 6.

³⁴⁸ Dominique Clift, "Trudeau stands aloof from opponents arguing federal-provincial quarrels," *Toronto Daily Star*, 5 April 1968, page 10.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

with provincial premiers, while Kierans envisioned a new constitution with a more decentralized federal government.³⁵²

Trudeau challenged his leadership opponents and Quebec Premier Daniel Johnson at the convention. While Trudeau's opponents disputed his position on federal-provincial relations, specifically on Quebec, the Justice Minister continued to direct his arguments toward the Quebec premier who had been elected on a slogan of "equality or independence." The *Toronto Daily Star* reported:

Trudeau launched immediately into an attack on Quebec Premier Daniel Johnson's view that what Quebec needs is not so much protection for individual rights but for collective rights.

"When we talk of our country I like to think of the individuals in the country," he said. "When we talk of constitutional matters, when we talk of federal-provincial relations, I like to think of the individual."

"I believe that it is the individual human being which is the backbone of a country. This is something we got away from when we began to deal with these various problems of national unity."

"The citizens of Canada are not too concerned whether the exercise of this jurisdiction comes from the federal government or the provincial governments."³⁵³

In his speech to Liberal delegates on 5 April 1968 Trudeau called into question his colleagues' positions on national unity. Specifically Trudeau described their positions as evasive:

I believe that the voters or the members of a party, either Federal or Provincial, have the right to demand that their leaders speak out clearly on the role of Quebec another vital issues. We are no longer satisfied with vague generalities or adroit evasions. Those who resort to them betray a lack of confidence in democracy.³⁵⁴

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ MG 28 IV 3, Liberal Party fonds, volume 1056, file - National Leadership Convention 1968 - Trudeau Leadership Convention April, "Notes For A Speech By the Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau At the Liberal Convention Ottawa," 5 April 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

Trudeau's comments demonstrated a consistent position on issues concerning Quebec and federal-provincial relations. His comments also drew a line in the sand for his opponents, whether Liberal or Conservative, federalist or separatist.

Trudeau's opponents also threatened to exacerbate the issue of national unity to gain partisan favour. How would they continue to serve under a Trudeau government if they feel his approach to Quebec and constitutional issues were so wrong? By calling out his Liberal opponents for not taking a concise position on national unity, and by suggesting his opponents also lacked confidence in democracy, Trudeau also created an "us versus them" paradigm within the party which undermined the possibility of post-convention unity. How could Trudeau justify trusting these Liberals in the constitutional debates of the future? The debates surrounding national unity at the 1968 convention ran deep and revealed a clear divide among Liberals, with direct consequences on the future leadership of both the party and the country.

The Balloting

The balloting to select the next leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and Prime Minister took place on Saturday 6 April 1968. Some candidates dropped off the balloting refused to publicly endorse anyone, while others moved openly to their former opponents' boxes on the convention floor. The entire process was a political spectacle unfolding live on national television. Some Liberal candidates took defeat hard, and the winners of each ballot watched as opponents, sometimes friends, dropped out of the race and even endorsed another candidate. The consequences of the balloting left lasting scars on the Party. In terms of pure politics,

organization and unity, the 1968 convention saw most leadership candidates prioritize their own careers over the success of the political organization.

Voting was conducted under the supervision of two returning officers appointed by the convention. The returning officers appointed deputy returning officers and clerks to supervise the voting at each individual polling station. The Convention Committee decided that delegates would vote on IBM Votomatic computer voting machines. The results were tabulated by computer and reported by the returning officers. Delegates were divided into voting stations based on alphabetical order and were required to wear their delegate's badge to vote.³⁵⁵

A candidate with more than 50 per cent of the vote would be declared the winner of the Liberal leadership race, but the rules for balloting had changed since 1958. The new rules of procedure explained that “the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes or all candidates receive less than 50 votes in any ballot shall be dropped from the list of eligible candidates.” In the event of a tie between the two lowest candidates with both vote totals in excess of 50, both candidates could remain on the ballot.³⁵⁶

Voting for the first ballot began around 1:00 p.m. on the final day of the convention. Each candidate had their own box on the convention floor where they, their friends and family, and prominent supporters sat between votes. The first ballot results confirmed that Trudeau was the favourite, leading after the first ballot. Martin's 277 votes were considered a significant disappointment, confirming media speculation about his slipping support.³⁵⁷ Martin wrote in his memoirs that he and his campaign team realized the likely result of the first ballot after the

³⁵⁵ MG 28 IV 3, Liberal Party Fonds, volume 1158, file - National Leadership Convention 1968 - Candidates Liaison Committee, “National Liberal Convention 1968 Rules of Procedure,” Library and Archives Canada.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Cahill, *John Turner*, 28; Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 86.

opening day of the Convention,³⁵⁸ which his son corroborates.³⁵⁹ The Minister of External Affairs told his advisors that he planned to withdraw after a poor showing on the first ballot.³⁶⁰ When he did, he refused to publicly support another candidate -- despite attempts by both Hellyer and Winters to bring him on their sides.³⁶¹ Not even his own son knew for whom his father voted.³⁶² Kierans also withdrew and, like Martin, refused to endorse another candidate. Henderson was forced off the ballot and MacEachen, who intended to withdraw, was unable to do so in time and stayed on the second ballot. Despite the technical error, MacEachen moved to Trudeau's box and supported him for leader.³⁶³

³⁵⁸ Martin, *A Very Public Life Volume II*, 626-627.

³⁵⁹ Martin, *Hell or High Water*, 70.

³⁶⁰ Martin, *A Very Public Life Volume II*, 626-627.

³⁶¹ CP, "Victory Taunts Hellyer Camp," *Chronicle Herald*, 8 April 1968.

³⁶² Martin, *Hell or High Water*, 70.

³⁶³ Lewis Seale, "Humorous, challenging in victory, Trudeau calls for just society in Canada," *Globe and Mail*, 8 April 1968, page 8.

Table 1: Ballot Results at the 1968 Liberal Leadership Convention

	First Ballot	Second Ballot	Third Ballot	Fourth Ballot
Joe Greene	169	104	29	-
Paul Hellyer	330	465	377	-
Lloyd Henderson	0	-	-	-
Eric Kierans	103	-	-	-
Allan MacEachen	165	11	-	-
Paul Martin	277	-	-	-
Pierre Trudeau	752	964	1,051	1,203
John Turner	277	347	279	195
Robert Winters	293	473	621	954
Spoiled Ballots	24	15	19	13
Total Vote	2,390	2,379	2,376	2,365
MG 28 IV 3, Liberal Party fonds, volume 1158, file - National Leadership Convention 1968 - Balloting Results, "Balloting Results," Library and Archives Canada.				

Hellyer went into the Convention believing he could win. Although second to Trudeau, Hellyer's first ballot showing was a significant disappointment to his campaign, which believed he would achieve at least 439 votes.³⁶⁴ In an interview with Peter Stursberg, Hellyer openly admitted that his speech had cost him. "What went wrong?" Hellyer asks rhetorically. "Mostly

³⁶⁴ MG 32 B 33, Paul Hellyer fonds, volume 29, file 1 - Political Leadership Convention 1968, "Potential Delegates List By Province," 28 March 1968, Library and Archives Canada.

my speech. It lost me, I think, about 140 first-ballot votes. We had someone polling people on the way in, and on the way out, and the difference was just dramatic. The difference was heightened by Joe Greene's great stump speech just ahead of me."³⁶⁵ Hellyer attested that many who left him on the first ballot intended to come back to him -- but some never did.³⁶⁶ Whelan writes in his memoirs that Winters was involved in a three-way race with Trudeau and Hellyer, but Martin remembers being surprised of Winters' showing on the first and subsequent ballots.³⁶⁷ Sullivan writes that Hellyer's campaign immediately reached out to Winters' but failed to persuade him to drop out and endorse Hellyer.³⁶⁸

The second ballot of the Convention changed the outlook of the race. With MacEachen opting to support Trudeau, this left a total of 569 votes up for grabs. Trudeau continued to grow his first ballot lead, winning 26 per cent of the free delegates, to Hellyer's 24 and Turner's 12. Winters was the surprise, however, growing his vote by 31 per cent from the first ballot. Hellyer and Winters were within 8 votes of one another and both refused to move to the other. Turner's showing grew but his total was far from matching Hellyer and Winters. According to Sullivan, Winters was a major threat to Trudeau.³⁶⁹ Litt contends that after the second ballot, Hellyer and Winters needed to align with a third candidate to defeat with Trudeau,³⁷⁰ but neither Hellyer nor Winters were ready to step aside and allow the other to challenge Trudeau. Bill Lee, Hellyer's

³⁶⁵ Peter Stursberg, *Lester Pearson and the dream of unity*, (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1978), 431.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 432.

³⁶⁷ Whelan with Archbold, *Whelan*, 116; Martin, *A Very Public Life Volume II*, 627.

³⁶⁸ Sullivan, *Mandate 68'*, 351.

³⁶⁹ Sullivan, *Mandate 68'*, 351.

³⁷⁰ Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 87.

Campaign Manager, advised Hellyer to move to Winters. “It’s over, Paul... Let’s go now.”³⁷¹
Hellyer refused.

The Hellyer-Winters log jam exemplified the Liberal Party’s intra-organizational weakness coming out of the 1968 Convention. Neither candidate would join together to stop Trudeau, even though he represented a fundamentally different Liberal than what they both preferred. Realistically, Hellyer and Winters’ opportunity to join their campaigns had to happen before the third ballot to draw significant support away from Turner and Greene. Hellyer refused to go to Winters because he believed his centrist delegates would not follow in large numbers.³⁷² Therefore Hellyer attempted to persuade Winters to move to him. Winters, in second place, refused to support a candidate with fewer votes than himself. Litt writes that Bill Lee, Hellyer’s campaign manager, also attempted to persuade Hellyer to drop out and switch to Turner, believing that Turner represented the best opportunity to grow support,³⁷³ but Hellyer also refused to support a candidate with fewer delegate votes than himself.³⁷⁴

The Liberal infighting became public. “In the midst of the emotional uproar after the second ballot at the Liberal leadership convention Saturday,” Cahill reported in the *Toronto Daily Star*, “Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh struggled through the screaming crowds clutching a green and white Robert Winters button in her hand”³⁷⁵:

She was weeping as she leaned over Transport Minister Paul Hellyer and shouted in his ear.

³⁷¹ CP, “Victory Taunts Hellyer Camp,” *Chronicle Herald*, 8 April 1968.

³⁷² Stursberg, *Lester Pearson and the dream of unity*, 433-434.

³⁷³ Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 87.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ Jack Cahill, “‘Go Now, Paul--don’t make a Trudeau,’ weeping Judy tells Hellyer,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 8 April 1968, page 12.

“Go now, Paul,” she yelled at the man she had backed into the leadership race. “If you don’t go now you’re only making a Trudeau.”

“If you don’t back Winters it will be too late and Trudeau will make it.”

“Winters is all right. You know him and he knows you. You’re all right with him.”

And if you don’t get together,” she shouted, “you’ll both go down and let that bastard in.”³⁷⁶

LaMarsh disputes the facts. “The public has the erroneous impression that I called the Prime Minister a bastard in public, on television,” she said in her memoirs. “I did not do that.”³⁷⁷

LaMarsh did call Trudeau a bastard, but behind his back -- although she spotted the reporter within earshot when she shouted in Hellyer’s ear. “I knew that remark was likely to come to the public’s attention,” she conceded. “I could not know that a directional microphone had also picked it up for the world to hear.”³⁷⁸ LaMarsh had told her riding association before the convention that she did not intend to seek re-election, but her reference to Trudeau signaled the intensity and bitter feelings associated with the leadership race. Regardless, Hellyer refused to budge and LaMarsh retreated to Winters’s box in tears.

The third ballot of the convention saw only 26 free votes as MacEachen was finally off the ballot. Greene’s support took a significant hit, with the Minister of Agriculture losing 75 votes, finishing under 50 votes, and being automatically removed from the fourth ballot. Greene moved to Trudeau’s box, also endorsing the Justice Minister. Both Turner and Hellyer lost votes as well. Winters claimed the majority of switched votes on the third ballot, capturing 148 votes or 57.5 per cent. Trudeau still captured 33.8 per cent of the switched vote (87 total ballots),

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ LaMarsh, *Memoirs of a bird in a gilded cage*, 347.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

however, upping his overall numbers to 44.2 per cent of the total vote. This pushed him closer to the 50 per cent plus one margin of victory.

When Hellyer decided to concede and drop out of the race to endorse Winters, both tried to bring Turner on board in a last ditch attempt to defeat Trudeau. Turner turned them both away, making good on his pledge to make no deals and let the convention decide. Radwanski suggests that if Turner had moved to Winters, Trudeau may have lost on the final ballot:

Although he arrived at the convention as the clear leader and maintained his position with strong performances in the policy workshops and in his main speech to delegates, Trudeau's victory was by no means certain until the fourth and final ballot; even after the third ballot...he might still have been defeated if Turner had thrown his support behind Winters instead of staying in the race to the finish.³⁷⁹

Cahill and Litt refute Radwanski's logic. They assert that Turner's campaign manager Jerry Grafstein believed that Turner's delegates, for the most part Young Liberals, would not support Winters.³⁸⁰ Furthermore Litt asserts that Turner did not like the optics of Anglophones ganging up on Trudeau, the lone French-Canadian in the race.³⁸¹ Turner refused and stayed on for what would be the fourth and final ballot.

Perhaps Bill Lee had it right on the second ballot when he asked Hellyer to move to Turner. Maybe Turner could have defeated Trudeau by uniting anti-Trudeau centrist and right-wing Liberals. Whatever "what if" history might have brought, Trudeau won on the fourth ballot with 50.8 per cent of the vote. Winters and Turner ascended to the stage and made the choice unanimous. The enigmatic Trudeau was the new Liberal leader and the next prime minister.

Conclusion

³⁷⁹ Radwanski, *Trudeau*, 105.

³⁸⁰ Cahill, *John Turner*, 29-30; Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 87-88.

³⁸¹ Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 88.

The wheel of time had turned for the Liberal Party and the 1968 Convention demonstrates a transformation in Party culture. In the wake of multiple decades of electoral success, the Party was ripe for a new direction. The introduction of amendments to the criminal code, the adoption of universal health care, a distinct Canadian flag and the Canada Pension Plan all resembled a Canada looking to grow and modernize. Many new Liberals sought to build on the Party's long history and build bridges into Canada's next generation. The 1968 Convention saw more than just new candidates, but a debate on the various directions the Liberal Party and the country, could go.

Alternance was a prevalent issue among Liberals at the 1968 Convention. Although the media ignored alternance as a method of defining the narrative, it remained a quiet factor as Liberal delegates made up their minds. The evidence suggests that alternance inspired strong feelings at the parliamentary levels of the party, which still exerted influence on party members. Although it was not the only factor or even the most important one, it clearly helped frame the perception of how some Liberals viewed the leadership question.

Alternance was compounded with a field of adept potential Liberal leaders vying for the job. The strong field of candidates and the likelihood of multiple ballots heightened uncertainty surrounding the 1968 convention. Although Trudeau had significant momentum at the outset, predictions that Hellyer, Winters and Turner were picking up steam proved accurate. In the end Trudeau won on the fourth ballot after Hellyer, Winters and Turner were unable to unite their cause. The intensity of the convention and the months of campaigning that preceded it made personal agreements between the candidates difficult to accept on the early ballots.

The tactics deployed at the 1968 convention speak to the intensity of the race and the desire to win. Rumours of dirty tricks persisted and spilled out into the press. Liberal candidates were at odds with one another and the Canadian media reveled in details of infighting. The candidates knew that their best chance to win the leadership was to lure their opponents into supporting them after an early exit, but the intensity of the race complicated the trust needed to secure such support before and during the balloting.

The large number of strong candidates in the race perpetuated rumours of back room deals. The chapter linked together the reports in the Canadian media with private political accounts. The inability or unwillingness of other candidates' to come together meant that no one could stop Trudeau's surging campaign. The back room deals that occurred at the 1968 Convention equated to personal interest, success and ambition, relegating any benefits to the Liberal Party to the periphery of the negotiations.

A startling component of the 1968 convention is the disputes over national unity that occurred openly amongst Liberal Party leadership candidates. Without question all the major candidates were playing politics with national unity as it related to Quebec. Many of the leadership candidates sought to gain political traction in the race by publicizing discontent within the government. Trudeau drew a line in the sand between his opponents and himself on his home province. The Justice Minister stood by his policy and questioned the integrity of his colleagues. Although his indirect remarks about his colleagues are justified in defence of government policy, it raised questions around the membership and unity of Cabinet after the convention. Moreover, the outcome of the convention would have a bearing on federal-provincial relations. Trudeau's opponents questioned his own position on national unity as well as federal-provincial relations,

thus openly criticizing the policy of the government in which they served and hoped to lead. Diverging positions on national unity generated credibility issues that should have been discussed behind closed doors like the rest of government business.

The 1968 convention can also be explained through theoretical constructs. Courtney asserts that as the number of candidates seeking the office increases, so does the number of ballots it takes to elect a winner. The nine candidates seeking the leadership resulted in four ballots before Trudeau was crowned the winner. Hellyer and Winters were ideal partners against Trudeau under the conflict of interest theory, as both were considered right-leaning Liberals and Trudeau left-leaning. Turner was also considered a right-leaning Liberal and his interests aligned well with Hellyer and Winters. Nevertheless, the three candidates were unable to come together in time to stop Trudeau.

Courtney's theory that that candidate who gains the largest share of the votes from the first to the second ballot ultimately wins the leadership race did not hold true in 1968. Winters gained 31 per cent of the free delegates on the second ballot compared to Trudeau's 26. Ultimately Trudeau went on to win. Still, Courtney's alternative hypothesis that the leader after the first ballot ultimately goes on to win the convention holds true. Trudeau led on the first ballot, capturing 31 per cent of the total vote, and won the leadership.

The tension of the 1968 Liberal leadership race culminated in the balloting, where candidates plotted against others. In the end, Hellyer, Winters and Turner proved unwilling to come together to promote their vision of the Liberal Party which differed so greatly from Trudeau's. Trudeau stood pat and outwaited his opponents. A clear differentiation between

groups remained: the Hellyer and Winters camp remained divided from both the Turner camp, and the Trudeau camp. So began a lasting trend in Liberal Party leadership politics.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Late in his life, Mackenzie King shared his recipe for political success with Lester Pearson: it matters not what you do right but what you avoid doing wrong.³⁸² Martin Goldfarb and Tom Axworthy explain that “King’s formula for never doing wrong rested on brokerage: if one could include all major interests within the party, then conflicts could be managed internally, allowing the party to present a unified front to the public.”³⁸³

As time progressed, the races for Liberal Party control grew more sophisticated and complex, forcing the Ottawa-based power clusters to listen to and court the opinions of Liberals across the country. The growth and evolution of the leadership convention in Canadian politics is explicitly clear through an examination of the 1948, 1958, and 1968 Liberal Conventions. John Courtney argues that leadership conventions can be summed up into two eras: the first is from 1919 to 1958 and is distinguished by the dominance of the parliamentary caucus of the party; while the second era is from 1967 to 1990 and is characterized by the intense competitiveness of the contests.³⁸⁴ In 1948 and 1958, both St Laurent and Pearson were heavy favourites. The 1968 Convention was far more difficult to predict. With a large number of competitive candidates and anticipation of multiple ballots, media coverage in 1968 allowed each of the candidates to expose

³⁸² Martin Goldfarb and Thomas Axworthy, *Marching to a Different Drummer: An Essay on the Liberals and Conservatives in Convention*, (Toronto: Stoddart, 1988), 46.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Courtney, *Do Conventions Matter?*, 12. Heather McIvor stresses that in the first era competitiveness is low. MacIvor, “The Leadership Convention: An Institution Under Stress,” 17.

the weaknesses of their opponents in a public setting. With the leadership perceived to be in the grasp of several candidates, the bitterer the battle became.

The tactics utilized at Liberal leadership conventions also changed over time. Strategies to court delegates emerged, as did campaign plans designed to weaken their opponents' efforts. Part of this evolution involved backroom deals. In 1948 William Lyon Mackenzie King quietly engineered the endorsement of St Laurent by key senior Liberal cabinet ministers at the convention. In 1968, the media exposed backroom dealing in detail, allowing the candidates to posturing to bring more delegates onside. The focus of the race changed from the strength of the Liberal Party to the success of individual leadership candidates.

The examination of the 1948, 1958 and 1968 conventions has demonstrated the evolution of alternance and its impact on Liberal leadership races. In 1948 alternance was largely associated with King's efforts in supporting St Laurent. King believed it right to entrust a Liberal from Quebec with the responsibility of party leader. In 1958, although unstated, St Laurent seemed to prefer Pearson as his successor. St Laurent warned Paul Martin Sr. in 1948 that the Liberal Party would likely be unable to elect two consecutive French-speaking Roman Catholics. Consequently, Pearson's election as leader ensured that alternance would be a factor in Liberal leadership races from that point onward. By the time of the 1968 Convention, alternance had become part of party discourse and was a well-known factor for both elected and grassroots level Liberals.

Internal unity proved increasingly tenuous over time. In 1948 King's efforts at the convention preserved party unity. In 1958 the race between Martin and Pearson was characterized by their ability to push personal ambition aside and continue to work together for

the good of the party organization. Unity took a sudden turn at the 1968 convention. The race to replace Pearson was associated with the question of what the Party would become under the leadership of each of the candidates. Accordingly, the race focused entirely on the individuals and deviated from the strength and maturity of the organization as a whole. The race took an even sharper turn when the candidates opposed one another on issues concerning national unity. These factors saw Trudeau stand his ground on government policy towards Federal-Provincial relations, especially in regard to Quebec, while his opponents opposed him and Pearson's approach to the issue. This debate over national unity was a fundamental flaw in the 1968 leadership race and spawned disunity within the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party's most senior officials were on record opposing Trudeau's approach to Federal-Provincial relations.

Paul Martin Sr. was a fundamental player in the three conventions from 1948-1968. Martin's desire to be Liberal leader and prime minister was evident as early as 1948, but his career was marred by the unfortunate circumstances associated with timing and identity politics. In 1948 Martin refused to test the waters and run against St Laurent. He was clearly perturbed by King's interference in the race but ultimately opted to support St Laurent, whom he believed to be the best choice for Liberal leader. In 1958 Martin's race against Pearson failed as a result of poor timing, unsupportive press coverage and a lack of support within caucus. His cultural, linguistic, and religious background would have been a drag on a party that needed to entice voters in English-speaking, Protestant ridings of Ontario and the Maritimes. Pearson was a better fit, strategically, to win an election. Moreover, the media's portrayal of the race between a premier Canadian statesman and front-runner versus a professional politician and underdog ultimately undermined Martin's dreams. Martin seemed the logical choice to succeed Pearson in

1968 until Trudeau entered the race. Martin's identity as a French-speaking Roman Catholic from Ontario did not stand up to a comparatively young, energetic, French-speaking candidate from Quebec. Martin bowed out after the first ballot and refused to break neutrality. It is hard not to sympathize with the man who put his party before his own ambitions for more than two decades. Martin served three Liberal leaders in the House of Commons, the Senate and the international stage -- a committed partisan through and through.

But times had changed, and so had the party. The 1968 Liberal Convention marked a change in party politics that had long nurtured working relationships amongst ideological liberals, conservatives and moderates under the banner of the "governing party." Near-unanimous leadership choices at the 1948 and 1958 Conventions were relegated to the Liberal past. By 1968, Liberal leadership hopefuls placed their personal ambitions over the solidarity and success of the party.

The priorities for Liberals like King, Gardiner, St Laurent, Howe, Pearson, and Martin were different than those of Trudeau, Hellyer and Winters. For the former, the Liberal Party was a lifetime investment, a vehicle to bring progress and betterment to Canadians. They viewed the Liberal Party as a team, a brand that was trusted. The latter saw things differently. Members with ambition now viewed the political organization as a vehicle for personal achievement, prestige and betterment. Turner, who reveled in Liberal traditions, eventually felt dissociated as well. Still is it not accurate to say that this new generation of Liberals was purely selfish and self-motivated. Their attitudes represented a change in party culture. As an institution, the Liberal Party became polarized. Hellyer soon left the party altogether. John Turner resigned in 1975 after Trudeau overruled his finance minister's refusal to impose mandatory wage and price controls.

Turner, who reveled in Liberal traditions, felt dissociated. According to Litt, Turner felt his personal position would deteriorate while the government slid “dreamily left.” With party leadership out of reach, Turner walked away for a decade, feeling that Trudeau separated him from the beliefs and morals that drew him to be a Liberal in the first place.³⁸⁵ He only returned after Trudeau announced his retirement. These aspirants to leadership desired to be more than mere parts of the Liberal machine. They desired leadership, subscribed to their own views, and refused to be a part of the new leader’s team. This trend of infighting for control in the Liberal Party would continue for decades.

The Liberal Wars began during Trudeau’s administrations and continue today. The 1984 leadership campaign was a race between Jean Chrétien, who championed Trudeau’s record as Liberal leader, and Turner, who sought to distance himself from the party establishment. After Chrétien lost the leadership to Turner, tension built between the two until 1986. Press stories documented Chrétien’s desire to be leader, while Turner sought to consolidate his control over the party by limiting Chrétien’s performance in the House of Commons. Chrétien hit the boiling point when Turner interfered in the race for Liberal Party president in 1986 by convincing Francis Fox (favoured by Chrétien) to quit the race in favour of Paul Routhier.³⁸⁶ Consequently, Chrétien informed Turner on 27 February 1986 that he was resigning his seat after twenty-three years in politics.³⁸⁷

When the Liberal Party held a leadership race to replace Turner in June 1990, Chrétien returned and the delegates elected him leader on the first ballot over his main opponent Paul

³⁸⁵ Litt, *Elusive Destiny*, 198.

³⁸⁶ Martin, *Chrétien Volume 1*, 355-356.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 356.

Martin Jr. Chrétien went on to lead three majority governments before stepping down amid rampant speculation of a Martin leadership bid in 2003. “I did not like what was happening within the party,” Chrétien confesses in his memoirs, “especially as I knew it was all for nothing.”³⁸⁸ Martin Jr. elaborates on the intense environment in his own memoirs. “It was by this time indisputable that the party and the caucus did not want to face another election under the same leadership,” he observes. “The same was true of the public.”³⁸⁹ Martin was the odds on favourite to replace Chrétien, but their mutual dislike was palpable and increasingly obvious both within and outside of the party.

Martin won the Liberal Party leadership at the 2003 Convention and won a minority government in the 2004 general election. Ultimately Martin Jr.’s government was brought down by the Quebec sponsorship scandal – a legacy of the Chrétien era. Unable to recover politically, the Liberals lost the 2006 election to Stephen Harper’s Conservative Party. Martin Jr. resigned in the wake of this bitter defeat, but party infighting continued, driven by the belief that the Liberals were always just one election away from returning to office. The pattern persisted under Stéphane Dion, Michael Ignatieff, and Bob Rae. In shambles, the Liberal party fell to third party status in the 2011 federal election – its worst defeat in history. As the party finds itself searching for a new leader today, the question remains whether the candidates will be able to balance their personal ambitions with the good of the party – and the good of the country.

³⁸⁸ Jean Chrétien, *My Years as Prime Minister*, (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 380.

³⁸⁹ Martin, *Hell or High Water*, 237.

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