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ISBN 0-612-13090-8

Canada

**LIBERAL PARTY ORGANIZATION AND
MANITOBA'S 1995 PROVINCIAL ELECTION**

BY

ROBERT ANDREW DRUMMOND

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Getting your candidate elected is a tough job. It is also true that at the end of the day there are more losers than winners. This thesis is dedicated to the volunteers, staff and candidates who worked hard for the Liberal party in 1995 but had little success. Politics is an art. Next time you will be ready to paint again.

I would also like to thank my thesis advisor Thomas Peterson for his help and encouragement in completing this thesis. He listened, gave advice and questioned my ideas but always encouraged me to keep going. After a long career he has earned his retirement but it will be at the expense of the Department of Political Studies and graduate students who come after me.

I also owe special thanks to Don Hillman and Monica Bell. They allowed me a unique perspective on political parties by allowing me to volunteer at Campbell House. I paid for that perspective with hard work but it was worth it for their friendship. With Paul Edwards, Ginny Hasselfield, Beth Phillips, Tim Ryan, Dr. Al Patterson, Neil Gaudry, Jim Woodman, John Storzuk, Mary-Ellen Evans, Gary Kowalski, Rod Zimmer, Brenda St. Clair, Kevin Lamoureux, and Philippe Le Quéré they demonstrate what it means to be a Liberal.

Lastly I want to thank Allister Gunson. As the 1995 campaign chair he did his best under difficult circumstances. After the election the party was quick to criticize his efforts and point out his mistakes. Most of these Monday morning quarterbacks, myself included, probably wouldn't have done much better. During the election he gained my respect and if he wanted to be a campaign chair again I wouldn't hesitate to volunteer.

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ABSTRACT

Once considered almost extinct, the Liberal Party in Manitoba experienced a phenomenal breakthrough in 1988, yet in 1990 was unable to build on this success. In 1995 though, with a core of six seats in the legislature and a new leader, optimists in the party hoped for an electoral breakthrough. But in spite of its early high popularity in the polls, it suffered its worst defeat since 1986 and lost its official party status in the legislature. Analysis of this loss, using questionnaires and interviews, points to several organizational factors that contributed to the disappointing result.

The party had serious internal problems, including inactive constituency associations and a weak executive. A rural-urban split is also still evident and while the party's structure emphasizes participatory democracy this is largely illusory. Because of the dominance of the urban wing, the provincial party also remained closely associated with the federal Liberals. This meant that, during the course of the campaign, provincial Liberals were seen as defending federal gun control policy. This had devastating effects on rural support. Technology also had a significant impact. The Liberal campaign attempted to supply each constituency association with a database program but this came to be regarded as a failure. The party's election readiness committee had notable success in fund-raising and candidate recruitment but otherwise failed to create a strong provincial campaign. An inadequate policy process, a disorganized leader's tour, inexperienced campaign personnel, poor organization, divisions within the party, and one way communication with constituency associations all plagued a poorly run central campaign. All things considered there were too many problems for the Liberal party to surmount during its thirty-five day ordeal.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

After a boom and bust electoral history, in 1995 the Liberal Party in Manitoba once again appeared as a resurgent political force.¹ Although reduced to just six seats, after having won twenty seats in 1988, the party still seemed a credible alternative to the New Democrats and the Progressive Conservatives. Paul Edwards, the party's new provincial leader, was young and inexperienced but seemed to have the skills needed to take the party to victory. The party had two years to prepare for the election, unlike the unexpected 1990 campaign, and had attracted an exceptionally strong slate of provincial candidates. Manitobans also appeared willing to vote Liberal, as the party enjoyed continued high popularity in the polls.²

But in spite of these advantages, the 1995 Liberal campaign proved a disaster. Instead of making gains, the Liberals were reduced to only three seats, losing even the leader's seat and official party status in the legislature. It was the party's worst defeat since 1986 when it had won only one seat. This setback was particularly surprising. The Liberal party appeared to have made a comeback. Its success in the 1993 federal election seemed to signal Manitobans willingness to vote Liberal. Two of the last three provincial by-elections had also been won by the Liberal candidates.

¹ Timothy Lang, "Liberals in Manitoba: Provincial Decline and Resurgence," (University of Manitoba, MA thesis, Spring 1991).

² In a Quatro Associates' poll released on the first day of the campaign, Liberal support appeared strong at 37 per cent, with the Progressive Conservatives at 28 per cent and the NDP at 16 per cent. (Margin of error +/- 7 cent 19 times out of 20), "and the survey says," The Lance, March 21, 1995, p. 6.

An early Angus Reid-CBC poll showed the Liberals running a close second to Gary Filmon's Progressive Conservatives.³ By the end of the campaign, however, the Liberal party would only receive 23.6 per cent of the vote. Liberal support collapsed. But what happened in the space of thirty-five days to change the public's opinion of the Liberal party is not an easy question to answer. On the political battlefield nothing is certain; issues, conditions, events, personalities and technology all combine to tilt the scales one way or another. But campaign organization is also one of these elements and in 1995 the Liberals ran a notoriously weak provincial campaign. Strong organization is also a barometer of a party's strength. Thus the provincial Liberal Party's defeat can be attributed to weak policy, divisive social issues, the influence of federal politics and weak communications that all plagued a poorly managed provincial campaign, but these difficulties are also reflections of serious problems within the party.

1.2 THE PARTY, CAMPAIGNS AND TECHNOLOGY

The traditional role of a political party in a democratic society has been to permit dissent and the transfer of power without violent revolution. This role has not changed in one hundred and fifty years of parliamentary government, yet political parties themselves have undergone dramatic evolution.⁴ From a larger perspective they are still responsible for selecting leaders, making policy and running elections but, more and more, they have become involved in activities that are not conspicuously political.⁵

³ Paul Mackie, "Grits on PCs trail, poll shows," Winnipeg Free Press, March 23, 1995, p. B3.

⁴ Paul S. Herrnson, Party Campaigning in the 1980s, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 1 - 7.

⁵ Conrad Winn and John McMenemy, eds., Political Parties in Canada, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976), p. 167.

Evolving from part-time associations whose bonds were forged during elections and leadership campaigns, political parties have been transformed into full-time political machines and it is the political machine which now defines the tasks confronting the modern party.⁶ Fund-raising, media and research personnel, communication and office staff, as well as professional campaign workers influence how leaders are selected, how policy is developed and how elections are won or lost.

There is no secret to winning elections: the goal is to convince enough of the electorate to vote for a particular party or candidate. But winning elections has become a complicated and expensive battle.⁷ Tasks commonly associated with election campaigns now include policy development, research and polling activities, electronic publishing, media liaison, print, radio and TV ad campaigns, as well as public relations and fund-raising, all dedicated to presenting a focused and positive party image. It is an exacting task best suited to an experienced and flexible campaign team backed by a strong party organization.

One common theme in pursuit of this goal has been the growing importance of a centralized campaign. The election is still partly won at the constituency level: getting the candidate out on the street to meet voters may still be the best way to get a strong candidate elected. It is this personal contact which organizers hope will determine the decision at the ballot box, but the electorate is increasingly influenced by the media. Accordingly, the need to focus, direct and control the party's campaign message has meant a move away from constituency politics toward a more centralized campaign structure.

⁶ Herrnson, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁷ Herbert M. Baus, William B. Ross, *Politics Battle Plan*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1986), p. 6.

With this development, winning elections has become a full-time occupation. Volunteers are still the foot soldiers, an important element in electoral success; but political parties have been obliged to develop an elite of professional campaign organizers.⁸ More and more these professionals are called on to prepare and pave the road that candidates, campaign managers and volunteers take to victory. It would be a mistake to believe political campaigns can be run by mercenary troops. In the long term, political parties must produce and train their own organizers.

The increasing importance of these organizers has, perhaps surprisingly, coincided with the development of party democracy. Leadership and policy conventions have replaced the political boss. Political elites still have a tremendous amount of influence; only now these elites must spend more time and resources influencing the "democratic" process. Their role has become somewhat more subtle and less obvious.

The development of party democracy, however, comes at a price. Leadership and policy conventions require a level of logistical support and strategy beyond that provided by just volunteers. It is ironic that as political parties have moved away from back room politics they need more administration and full-time party staff to fulfil this democratic function. The Liberal party as well has generally become more democratic; however at the same time its campaign preparations have increasingly focused on the role of the campaign chair who is given extensive authority.

Under the guidance of the campaign chair, preparations for the campaign should begin well over

⁸ Ibid., p. 258.

a year in advance of election day. A campaign committee, usually a party standing committee, is formed and begins a policy process, deciding what message is going to be conveyed to the voter.⁹ A campaign staff is also hired, and with the input from a policy process, an overall political strategy is developed. In addition, a fund-raising strategy must be integrated into the campaign, since money is the basic building block of campaign politics.¹⁰ The general party membership is also involved in selecting candidates to run at the constituency level and organizing their candidate's local campaign.

Once a budget is forecast at the national or provincial level, campaign organizers decide some of the logistical problems associated with a campaign: selection and layout of office space, provision for phone and fax lines, cellular communications, transportation, development and production of campaign literature. Television and new information technologies must also be considered. In particular an Americanization process is at work, as Canadian campaigns become more leader-focused. The party's role has diminished somewhat, as the leader and his personal message now play a larger role in campaigns. Third party advertising by special interest groups is also a common element in modern campaigns and parties have sometimes successfully co-opted these campaigns for their own use. Notwithstanding their frequent avowals of non-partisanship, the intent of these special interest groups is usually to influence the course of the campaigns, creating or heightening support for the policies and issues they represent.

Computers, software programs, fax machines and cellular phones have also made their appearance

⁹ Anthony Gargrave and Raymond Hull, How to Win an Election: The complete practical guide to organizing and winning any election campaign, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), pp. 15 - 28.

¹⁰ Baus & Ross, op. cit., pp. 69 - 113.

in Canadian campaign politics. As Canadian society enters the "electronic superhighway," information has been turned into a commodity to be managed. The World Wide Web, and the Internet are also creating a revolution in how political parties communicate with the electorate and party members. Thus far, use of this technology is still in its infancy: today, it plays only a minor role in how campaigns are fought. But its effect has been felt; and as campaign managers become more familiar with its potential, it will play a larger role. Some traditionalists fear that "mass communications technology", in particular a reliance on televised politics and polling, will lead toward long-term party decline. Dubbed the "media intrusion theory," this view postulates that television and other technologies may create new forms of political communication that may eventually bypass traditional party structures.¹¹

Certainly technology has affected the evolution of political parties. In the recent past effective use of new technology, such as polling and television commercials, has given some parties a comparative advantage, potentially increasing their chances of winning. The growing reliance and dependence on this technology have changed their organizational structure. The technical demands of polling and television are such that it is no longer possible for a volunteer, without specialized knowledge, to administer many of the tasks effectively.

Nevertheless, technology, like any tool, can build or destroy. So while polling and television appear to have had a negative impact, marginalizing the role of the membership, newer technology, such as computers, can give parties a more powerful means of communicating with their membership. Parties

¹¹ Ian Ward, "Media Intrusion and the Changing Nature of Established Parties in Australia and Canada," Canadian Journal of Political Science, September 1993, p. 477.

that fail to adapt and utilize technology will be handicapped, as, policies and issues aside, elections may more and more be won by the best-managed, best-informed and best-financed party. Success is not assured, but, other things being equal, this combination "usually wins."¹²

In Canada, the Americanization process is now beginning to be felt. It is estimated that recent American innovations take about five years to find their way into Canadian politics.¹³ These forces have already influenced the course of provincial campaigns. As Canadian political parties better understand how communications systems function and how information management works, the use of these techniques will become more sophisticated. In assessing the impact of new technology on election campaigns however, basic party organization cannot be ignored. Volunteers must still be recruited, and this will still remain the function of constituency organizations. The demand of new computer technology, if it is to be implemented effectively, also places an emphasis on strong organization. It is not possible, without a sound basic organizational structure, to convey the focused and positive party image needed to convince the electorate and the media that a party is fit to govern. This thesis will analyze the provincial Liberal party's organization, its efforts to utilize technology in meeting the electoral challenge faced in April 1995, and the difficulties it encountered.

¹² Baus & Ross, *op cit.*, p. 6.

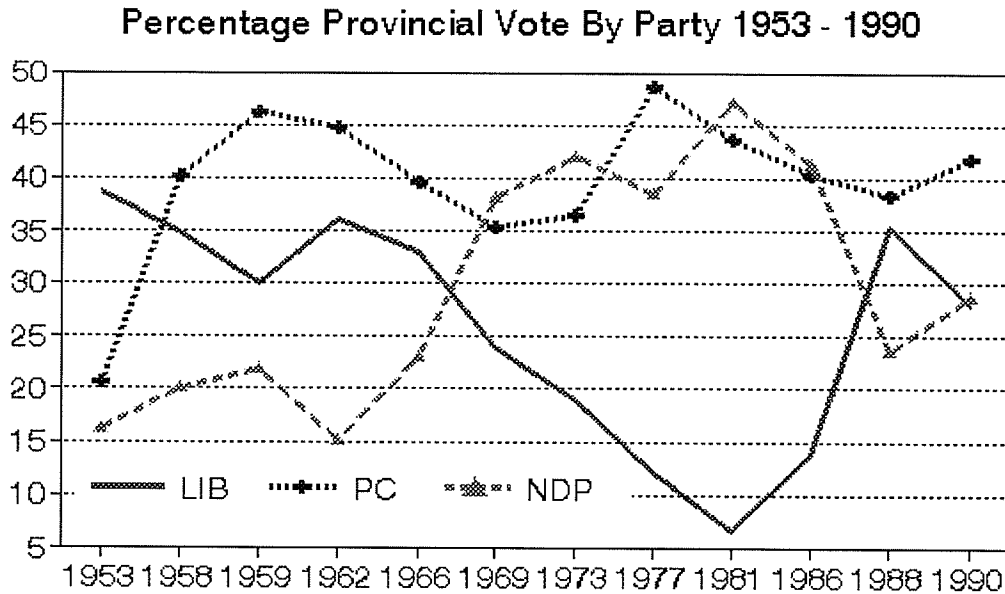
¹³ Tom Axworthy, "Capital-Intensive Politics: Money, Media and Mores in the United States and Canada," in F. Leslie, ed., *Issues in Party and Election Finance in Canada*, Vol. 5 of the Research Studies for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991), p. 191.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 DECLINE

Once considered a "dynasty" in Manitoba, the Liberal party from 1953 to 1988 underwent a dramatic decline and rejuvenation. At its worst, in 1981, Liberal support fell to 6.68 per cent;

TABLE ONE¹⁴



even so the party recovered dramatically in 1988, declined again in 1990, and entered the 1995 campaign with high expectations. Reasons for these fluctuations can be attributed to a number of factors that continue to influence the party.

One of the most obvious causes related to the Liberal decline was the growth of the New Democratic Party (NDP). During the sixties and seventies support traditionally given to the Liberal party

¹⁴ Based on data from: Elections Manitoba, Statement of Votes: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Thirty-Fifth Provincial General Election, September 11, 1990.

was lost to a more progressive NDP. This was a major drain on resources and talent, particularly in rural constituency organizations. It was partly due to the party's inability to define its ideological position clearly when it faced a polarized electorate.¹⁵ Thus, a party that in the 1920s and 1930s benefitted from the immigrants' need for acceptance, found that by the 1950s its position had been usurped by the more ethnic-conscious NDP, better ideologically equipped to serve this changing electorate. But by the 1970s this collapse was also due to a damaging rift between rural and urban ridings, caused partly by the actions of successive federal Liberal governments under Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.¹⁶

Timothy Lang identified this rift as an estrangement between conservative rural supporters and a more progressive urban element.¹⁷ In the 1960s and 1970s the provincial Liberal organization would be deeply damaged by this left-right cleavage. Essentially, it was a schism that had its roots in different views on such matters as public expenditure and social policy, with the rural wing traditionally more cautious about approving new social programs that it perceived as unnecessary and costly.¹⁸ On another level, this rift also had its origins in the province's history of coalition government and nonpartisan politics.

Late in the 1920s, Manitoba's farmers' Progressive movement moved closer to the Liberal party. This successful union supported three Liberal-Progressive coalition premiers: John Bracken, Stuart

¹⁵ Martin Robin, ed., Canadian Provincial Politics: The Party Systems of Ten Provinces, (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1978), p. 110.

¹⁶ David E. Smith, The Regional Decline of a National Party: Liberals on the Prairies, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 130.

¹⁷ Lang, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁸ Ted Byfield, "Liberals Leader Poser", Winnipeg Free Press, Nov 12, 1960.

Garson and Douglas Campbell. But while the Liberal party during this period reached its zenith, coalition governments evidently weakened its capacity for adjustment to changing social needs. Thus by the 1950s, as a majority of Manitoba's population became urban, the Liberal-Progressive party was weakened by the re-introduction of partisan politics; to many voters, it evidently seemed archaic and inflexible.

After Douglas Campbell's defeat in 1958, the Liberal-Progressives, or the Liberal Party of Manitoba as it became known in 1961, continued to experience decline. Ideologically the Party was split on a left-right axis. This struggle was reflected in the 1961 leadership convention that voted to drop the word Progressive from its name. At this convention, only two delegates opposed the decision, but one of them made a prophetic warning:

...the party would lose the support of a good many farmers who still consider themselves progressive not Liberals. The backbone of the Liberal Party is still the progressives.¹⁹

The provincial party never regained the Progressive support it once enjoyed in rural Manitoba. Federal Liberals, particularly in Canada's cities, did better, supporting a perception that the urban wing of the party was now dominant. Some observers suggested that a veiled anti-Francophone and anti-Semitic sentiment was also an underlying factor in the party's collapse.²⁰ Gildas Molgat and Izzy Asper, strong centrist politicians, constantly fought an entrenched right wing centered around Douglas Campbell. A succession of provincial leaders, some left, some right, also added to a general sense of insecurity concerning the ideological direction of the party.

¹⁹ Ted Byfield, "Liberals scrap progressive as part of party's name", Winnipeg Tribune, April 20, 1961.

²⁰ Interview, Tim Ryan, Past President Liberal Party in Manitoba, November 3, 1995.

By the 1970's, with the Trudeau administration in power, the ascendancy of the federal wing was an established fact, at least in urban areas, while many rural voters were seemingly convinced that the west had only a negligible influence in the Trudeau administration. The National Energy Program, the Official Languages Act, and a perceived favoritism towards Quebec all bit deeply into Liberal support in Western Canada.

In this context, some Liberal constituency associations, especially in Manitoba's rural areas, ceased to exist. In the 1973 provincial election the party failed to run candidates in seven rural constituencies. This decline would continue, reaching it lowest ebb in the 1981 election when the party failed to nominate candidates in eighteen constituencies. Outside large urban centers, the survival of rural constituency associations was made difficult by changes in party structure and organization that seemed to reinforce federal domination.

These new structures were inherited from the reforms of the 1960s under Keith Davey, national organizer from 1961 to 1966, and Senator Richard Stanbury, national president from 1968 to 1973. According to one analysis, they were a response to ministerial favoritism that promoted sectional and regional interests at the expense of the national good.²¹ Encouraging individual participation, and influenced by the American experience, some urban Liberals became convinced that closed "back room" systems, like those that had allegedly existed in Manitoba prior to the 1960s, could not provide democratic "feedback" or communicate the true attitudes of the electorate. The solution, it was felt, was the introduction of participatory democracy and a whole new structure.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 46 - 58.

Introduction of participatory democracy did little, however, to revive Manitoba's lagging Liberal fortunes. The left-right division was too deep to be solved by a series of party reforms that many rural Liberals did not understand or trust.²² Nor could structural tinkering revive a provincial organization that found its political message thwarted by the Tories under Duff Roblin and, after 1969, by the NDP's Edward Schreyer.

One proposed solution for Manitoba's problems suggested by James Richardson, a prominent Manitoban and a federal Minister in the Trudeau administration, in 1974 was the separation of the federal and provincial parties. In Quebec and other provinces the separation of party organizations had proven a useful solution to federal-provincial tensions. But in Manitoba such paralysis had already set in that no new provincial party emerged. Provincial constituency associations were not strong enough to demand more input into the party. After lengthy debate the only decision was to change the name to Liberal Party in Manitoba from the Liberal Party of Manitoba. Like wallpaper over cracked plaster, the name was intended to cover up federal-provincial divisions.

Friction may even have increased after Richardson made his recommendation. From 1977 through 1995 federal concerns with deficit reduction, increasing provincial powers and shrinking transfer payments have affected the course of provincial policies. As provincial governments were forced to cut back government services, they blamed the federal government, a pattern which can have damaging repercussions for provincial parties. Manitoba's Progressive Conservative Party recognized this, distancing themselves from the unpopular Mulroney government. During the 1990 provincial election,

²² Ibid., p. 77.

for example, they emphasized the "Filmon Team" over the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba in their campaign ads.

Political leadership was also drained from the provincial party. Lloyd Axworthy, a promising MLA, pursued a larger role in federal politics, becoming western Canada's most prominent Liberal politician. This trend would be continued, with Reg Alcock, the former Osborne MLA, making a successful jump to the federal arena in 1993. Such movement was to be expected, as some of the party's members consider federal elections somewhat more important than provincial ones.²³

The new participatory structure could scarcely contain these stresses. But prior to the 1995 election, many Manitoba Liberal members were ambivalent about the federal-provincial relationship. They did not feel strongly that competing interests caused insuperable problems and rejected a suggestion to divide the party into separate federal and provincial wings; but most were adamant that the provincial Liberal leader had an unmistakable obligation to represent Manitobans first.²⁴

2.2 RESURGENCE: THE LADY IN RED

Despite all its difficulties, the provincial party experienced a resurgence in 1988, winning fourteen seats from the New Democrats and five from the Progressive Conservatives. With twenty seats in the House the Liberal party became the official opposition. It was a dramatic comeback for a party that held one seat prior to the election and had not held office since 1958. This success was largely due to the

²³ See Appendix A, "Pre-election questionnaire," Question 11.

²⁴ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," questions 1,4,11,13,16 and 27.

leadership of Sharon Carstairs. It was so unexpected that the Winnipeg Free Press headlined the Liberals' sweep into opposition rather than Premier Filmon's election victory.²⁵ So surprised were some Liberals that they seemed to regard the victory as a magical demonstration of Carstairs charisma and a vindication of Liberal policies.

When elected as Liberal provincial leader in 1984, Sharon Carstairs became the first female leader of a Manitoba political party. Tireless in her dedication, she took on everything from fund raising to policy development. The "Lady in Red," as she became known to her supporters because of her tattered red overcoat, and a preference for red dresses, also became a media celebrity, noted for her direct, candid responses to reporters.²⁶ She was a dramatic alternative to the traditional male politician that dominated Manitoba's Legislature. But what is more important, she sought to mend the old divisions, visiting as many rural constituencies as possible.²⁷ She continued this attention to rural voters throughout her tenure as leader, contributing to the renewed popularity of Liberalism across the province.

In Turtle Mountain, a constituency in southwestern Manitoba for example, no Liberal association existed, and Carstairs held its first meeting, attended by only two members, in the back seat of her car.²⁸ Such grassroots campaigning had a cumulative effect: in 1981 Liberals polled only 17.4 per cent in Turtle

²⁵ Patrick McKinley, "Liberals Steal Tory Thunder," Winnipeg Free Press, April 27, 1988, p. A1.

²⁶ Carreen Maloney, "The end of an era for Lady in Red," Winnipeg Free Press, June 5, 1995, p. A1.

²⁷ Sharon Carstairs, Not One of the Boys, (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1993), p. 66.

²⁸ Ibid., p 86.

Mountain; in 1988 the Liberal share of the vote virtually doubled to 33.8 per cent.²⁹

Carstairs also capitalized on the emerging new wave of ethnic communities and their need for political acceptance. This was a return to the Liberal-Progressive tactic of co-opting ethnic leaders and capturing a reasonably stable ethnic vote. In the 1980s, instead of Ukrainians, Germans or Icelandic-Canadians, this meant focusing on Sikh, Filipino and Vietnamese minorities. It was a strategy that paid dividends in 1988. For example, Dr. Gulzar Cheema, a Canadian of Sikh origin, won the Kildonan constituency and became one of the first representatives of these new minorities to sit in the Legislative Assembly.

Carstairs' strong advocacy of social, health, community and women's issues also made her a natural at co-opting traditional NDP strength.³⁰ This bit deep into NDP support, reversing the trend that had seen Liberals lose ground to the NDP during the sixties and seventies. The result was a Liberal victory in twenty-one constituencies in 1988 reducing the NDP to just twelve seats.

But, as the official opposition the Liberal party was faced with a number of significant problems it had never encountered as Manitoba's third party. Except for herself, according to Carstairs, "most MLAs had never been at a Question Period or even watched one on television."³¹ This put the Liberals at a

²⁹ Elections Manitoba, Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Thirty-Fifth Provincial General Election, September, 11, 1990.

³⁰ Bob Richardson, "Opposing Strategies," A report prepared for Bob Richardson, Principal Secretary to the leader of the Opposition, (GPS Projects, Ottawa, 1992), p. 11.

³¹ Carstairs, op. cit., p. 133.

disadvantage in the legislature when compared to the NDP, many of whose MLAs had served in cabinet positions. The inexperience of most new Liberal MLAs also focused more attention on the leader at the expense of the caucus:

"Only Sharon seemed to be able to get us media" - said her House leader - "the leader had to be at the center," and this central role expanded over 2 1/2 years.³²

This central role placed an extra burden on the leader, particularly when she repeatedly had to deal with caucus and party demands in what often amounted to crisis management.³³ In relying on their leader, few Liberal MLAs got much of an opportunity to hone their opposition skills before Gary Filmon called an unexpected election for September 11, 1990. Some of them evidently expected the "magic" of 1988 to be repeated.³⁴ But instead they were reduced to seven seats, partly because the election caught so many in the party by surprise.

Believing that Filmon was not going to call a fall campaign Carstairs had not issued instructions for the preparations of a central campaign organization. As a result, the party had difficulty producing a campaign manual, and polling done shortly after the 1988 election, which became the basis for the 1990 strategy, was no longer valid. Constituency organizations also lacked experienced volunteers, so many candidates were left to sink or swim. Meanwhile, some inexperienced MLAs had not even set up full constituency executives, or campaign committees, necessary to ensure re-election.³⁵

³² Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁴ Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

³⁵ Carstairs, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

The 1990 campaign also failed to target constituencies and was criticized for time and effort seemingly wasted trying to attract rural voters in a period when farmers were busy with the harvest. Rushing from riding to riding, Carstairs was the only provincial leader to visit all 57 ridings, in a strategy to increase the party's rural presence. But in practice this sometimes meant walking small town streets that were deserted:

Often the only sound heard while mainstreeting in farming communities at this time of year was the click of Carstairs' heels as she searched out voters in what are essentially ghost towns.³⁶

A shifting campaign strategy also diluted Carstairs' message. Her campaign manager made a strategic decision to move away from social issues and focus on "economic issues."³⁷ This seriously conflicted with Carstairs' earlier image as an alternative political voice for matters of serious social concern, including women's and minority rights.

The Meech Lake Accord was another irritating problem. With most of the province apparently opposed to the deal, the Progressive Conservatives initially tried, nonetheless, to pass the Accord in the legislature, but then withdrew the amendment, with the support of both the NDP and Liberals, and assigned the difficult question to a task force. Carstairs' participation on the task force initially identified her strongly with those against the Accord; but she later appeared to accept it, and when Elijah Harper in effect defeated it, the Liberals seemed indecisive and weak.³⁸ It was an image that the party could not

³⁶ Dan Lett, "Road Warrior Carstairs Storms Countryside" Winnipeg Free Press, Sept, 5 1990, p. 1, cols 1-4.

³⁷ Carstairs, op. cit., p. 177.

³⁸ A. Cohen, A Deal Undone, (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre) pp. 256 - 265.

shake during the campaign and that probably contributed to its defeat.

The strain of the Meech Lake Accord, and the loss of the 1990 election, took its toll on Carstairs. Her leadership of the provincial party had always been complicated by an uneasy relationship with Lloyd Axworthy, the senior federal Minister from Manitoba. Carstairs and Axworthy had never developed a close working rapport, and partly because of this, Carstairs sometimes felt alienated from Manitoba's federal Liberals.³⁹ Following her defeat, this rift between two competing camps within the party added to the increasing burden that Carstairs soon found difficult to accept.

After the defeat in the 1990 election and the muddled handling of Meech Lake, Carstairs no longer had the energy to devote to the onerous and sometimes thankless job as leader. She stayed to fight the 1992 Referendum on the Charlottetown Accord but resigned from the leadership in 1993, saying she was tired of the demanding role.⁴⁰ She was assured a continuing role in politics, however, when she was appointed to the Senate in 1994.

With the departure of the "Lady in Red," a bright chapter in the Liberal Party's history was closed. According to a reporter it was a significant turning point for the party:

One right turn will lead to a bright future, with more moments such as the celebration one night in 1988... the wrong turn however will take them head-on into a massive, speeding semi-trailer truck that will squash them like bugs.⁴¹

³⁹ Carstairs, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁴¹ Donald Campbell, "Grits face big test", *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 6, 1993. p. A9.

Carstairs had started the long and difficult job of rebuilding the party, but a lot of important work still remained. Originally, when first elected leader in 1984, she had planned to win a small number of seats; only after four elections did she believe that the party would be ready for government.⁴² But beset by daily difficulties the party ignored that long-term plan. After 1993, little concentrated work was done at the constituency level. Nor had Carstairs groomed a clear successor. With the exception of Jim Carr, who left partisan politics to pursue a career as a journalist, or Reg Alcock, who was elected to parliament, many of the Liberal MLAs were vitually unknown outside their ridings.⁴³ Nor had Carstairs' valiant efforts eliminated old divisions within the party. These reasserted themselves at the leadership convention to choose her successor.

⁴² Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁴³ Interview, Tim Ryan, Past President Liberal Party in Manitoba, October 25, 1995.

CHAPTER THREE:

3.1 THE 1993 LEADERSHIP CONVENTION

With the resignation of Sharon Carstairs as provincial leader, the foremost question facing the Liberal Party in Manitoba was the selection of a new leader. Thus, on June 5, 1993, as governed by the constitution, a special party convention was held.⁴⁴ There were two candidates for the job: Kevin Lamoureux, the MLA for Inkster, and Paul Edwards, the MLA for St. James, both young, promising newcomers who had first been elected to office in 1988.

Lamoureux was twenty-nine and Edwards a year older. Having stood in the shadow of Carstairs, they were both considered untried and inexperienced. The Winnipeg Free Press described their leadership debate as a contest between Mr. Lamoureux, a salesman "afraid of the deep waters of policy," and Mr. Edwards, a college debater "who showed more technique than warmth."⁴⁵

Although it was denied in the press, Edwards had the advantage of being the establishment favorite. Educated as a lawyer and with a family history of involvement in politics, he had the connections and training that allowed him to move easily among the party's elite.⁴⁶ It was also felt that he could bridge the gap between the federal and provincial wings which had developed during Carstairs' leadership.

⁴⁴ Liberal Party in Manitoba, 1993 Constitution, Article 11 - Provincial Leadership Convention, p 11.

⁴⁵ Editorial, "Liberals get a leader," Winnipeg Free Press, June 6, 1993, p. A6.

⁴⁶ Doug Nairne, "Leader raised on Liberal diet," Winnipeg Free Press, June 6, 1993, A9.

Edwards' education also made him a natural leader in the much smaller caucus following the 1990 election. Thus, while initially reluctant to enter the leadership race, he was courted by prominent Liberals within the party who were looking for a more dynamic alternative to Kevin Lamoureux.⁴⁷ In the words of a party insider, "his (Paul Edwards') leadership campaign was based on the anyone-but-Kevin-theory."

Lamoureux's critics suggested that he lacked the public presence and training that made Edwards attractive. His small stature was said to make him look younger than he really was.⁴⁸ It was also felt that he did not have a sufficiently lively personality or the personal skills needed to take the party towards victory. More important perhaps, he was said to lack the useful upper-level connections in the party that Edwards had. On the other hand Lamoureux had earned the respect of the caucus with his effective service as the party whip. But among prominent Liberals he apparently had little appeal.

Lamoureux's strengths were also partly what made him distasteful to the self-styled power brokers. Representing the working class constituency of Inkster, in north Winnipeg, he was thought to be too dependent on the local Filipino community. His candidacy in this respect was a challenge to the oligarchy of affluent lawyers who have traditionally directed the party's affairs.

The 1993 leadership convention was made more open by the implementation of new voting procedures. Departing from the traditional delegate selection process, where rival candidates competed to elect slates of convention delegates at constituency association meetings, a vote was now given to all

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. A9.

⁴⁸ Carstairs, op. cit., p. 132.

Manitoba Liberals. The maximum number of votes from each constituency was capped at 100 and a small fee of ten dollars was charged for the right to vote.⁴⁹ The voting cap was deemed necessary to ensure that any new leader drew support from across Manitoba and the convention fee was needed to help make the leadership convention self funded. These arrangements likely did not prevent Lamoureux from winning the leadership. While his strength in North Winnipeg and some suburbs was exceptional, he lacked the province wide network that Edwards' supporters had. Even so the result was not assured. Many observers commented that the Edwards' leadership campaign was hastily organized, and in the end he won by only 236 votes.

For the party this experiment in participatory democracy was a limited success. Over 1,900 Liberals participated in the leadership convention. This was the largest number of Liberals in Manitoba who had ever voted to select a provincial leader. This expansion of democratic activity, in the long term, could likely have a beneficial effect. But, as Ernie Gilroy, the convention's chair, pointed out, there were two major problems with the new voting procedures:

Firstly, the task of providing each member (with) a right to vote in a convenient manner while securing the accuracy and the secrecy of the vote is a complex undertaking and the Party infrastructure needs to be upgraded to accommodate it. The database management system is of particular concern. Secondly, too many of the procedural details are enshrined in the constitution. When we wanted changes to accommodate minor glitches which occurred we found that we were prevented by the constitution.⁵⁰

Mail-in ballots, dictated by the constitution, were a particular concern as there was no certain, foolproof protection against registering non-existent voters. If a resident at a particular address bought six

⁴⁹ Ernie Gilroy, "Report to the President," Liberal Party in Manitoba, February 23, 1994, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

memberships falsely claiming that six qualified voters lived at that residence, for example, the party could not easily investigate and disallow this misrepresentation.

Such activities as these led to few serious complaints. It was even possible, given the extended nature of immigrant families, that six relatives living at the same address was to be expected, especially since the minimum voting age was fourteen. But more serious problems did occur; for example, a member of the executive, who was an agent of one of the candidates, was intercepted attempting to access voter registration lists from the party's computer system. Such unethical activity, however, was an exception rather than the rule, the product of excessive zeal. More significant was the fact that in the process of preparing for the convention, the party stumbled into some significant technical and organizational problems.

The leadership race demonstrated that the party's aging computer system needed serious upgrading.⁵¹ Without any security on the database system, anyone could generate confidential membership lists, as well as delete or add memberships at will. This was a serious concern for the convention chair, since it meant that he could not assure the integrity of the 100 ballot formula used to declare the winner. The fourteen-day cut off period also created technical difficulties. Since data input could only be done from one terminal at a time, it was a race to ensure that the large number of mail-in ballots were fairly distributed. Equipment and party personnel were also diverted from this critical task when notices for a constituency meeting in Winnipeg South and a fund-raising activity in Winnipeg North also had to be prepared. There was too much to do in too little time, a familiar challenge in politics,

⁵¹ Gilroy, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

compounded by unfamiliar procedures and technology.

On the day of the convention all these difficulties added to a three-hour delay in counting votes. Bickering between candidates' agents also contributed to confusion surrounding the formula being used to weight votes. This robbed the party of the traditional convention hoopla typically used to enliven a leadership race.⁵² In the end the election was decided by 1,000 mail-in ballots and 532 advance ballots long before the 311 party members who voted at the convention actually cast their ballots. Thus at the four convention sites across the province, there were no suspenseful moments between votes, no drama for the media, and few ardent supporters demonstrating in support of their favorite candidate for the benefit of the television cameras.⁵³

Some of these problems might seem trivial. Lamoureux's challenge to the party's alleged establishment can be seen in retrospect as little more than the usual controversy at most leadership conventions. But it also indicated that some in the party had reservations about electing a perceived "outsider" as leader. This lent some credence to longtime criticisms that the party is dominated by a small coterie of River Heights lawyers. Edwards, himself a River Heights lawyer, nonetheless was welcomed as the democratic choice to lead the party. Some critics felt his performance during the leadership debate was stiff but most voters evidently had little doubt he had the capacity to take the party to victory. During the 1995 campaign these skills were put to the test.

⁵² Dan Lett, "Party weights 'The Big Sleep,'" Winnipeg Free Press, June 6, 1993, A9.

⁵³ Editorial, "Liberal Get a Leader," Winnipeg Free Press, June 6, 1993, p. A6.

3.2 CONSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION

In terms of their formal structure, the bodies that govern and shape the Liberal Party in Manitoba are all defined in the constitution. But the constitutional structure of any party is an imperfect guide to its political life.⁵⁴ It cannot explain the decisions of elected representatives, party officials or power brokers. Nor can it prevent or contain the internal alliances and squabbles that are part of the political process. But it would be a mistake to discount the significance of constitutional structure altogether. Although an incomplete guide, it can provide some possible insight.

Structurally, the Liberal Party in Manitoba is a microcosm of the national Liberal Party of Canada and a product of the organizational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s that were adopted in varying degrees across Canada.⁵⁵ These reforms led to the development of Provincial Councils, Annual General Meetings and Leadership Conventions as part of an overall participatory structure.⁵⁶ Initially mistrusted because of their perceived federal origin, these reforms generally found gradual acceptance, although problems persisted.

Several of the Liberal party's national committees existed only in theory, while some important ones were not clearly defined.⁵⁷ Some existed only as advisory bodies, because real power rested with the political leadership, making constitutional structures little more than a facade behind which party elites

⁵⁴ Winn & McMenemy, eds., op. cit., p 167.

⁵⁵ Joseph Wearing, The L Shaped Party: The Liberal Party of Canada 1958 - 1980, (Toronto:McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1981), p. 159.

⁵⁶ Smith, op. cit., pp. 72 - 89.

⁵⁷ Winn & McMenemy, op. cit., p. 184.

operated. The role of the standing committee on policy development, for example, was relatively weak and could only: "...strive to ensure that the policy document is respected by the parliamentary wing and... report thereon to the national convention."⁵⁸ Manitoba's provincial constitution was even weaker on policy matters. No policy committee or process was clearly defined and the director of policy was given no other mandate than a general responsibility for "policy development in the provincial area."⁵⁹

The lack of procedural clarity in this area sometimes led to recriminations within the party. A rural candidate who participated in a policy conference during the 1994 Annual General Meeting explained some members' frustration:

Policy information was not available when needed and often confusing, vague and questionable in its origin. I was on two policy committees but didn't recognize the majority of policy in these areas when our "Red Book" came out.⁶⁰

The constitution provided for policy forums but these did little to answer complaints about policy vagueness.

At the heart of this constitutional organization were the Provincial Councils and Annual General Meeting (AGM). The Provincial Council performed a legislative function. Three times a year, constituency association presidents, members of the executive and past or currently nominated candidates assembled to discuss, and vote on, any matters deemed necessary by its membership. As a concession

⁵⁸ The Liberal Party of Canada, Constitution, amended at the 1990 National Convention, section 7, para 4, p. 33.

⁵⁹ Liberal Party in Manitoba, 1993 Constitution, Article 6, Section P, sub-section a, p. 7.

⁶⁰ See Appendix B, "Post election Questionnaire" response to Question 12.

to rural members, at least one of these meetings had to be held outside the City of Winnipeg.

In this connection, the Liberal Party had long been faced with the difficulty of ensuring an adequate rural voice.⁶¹ With the exception of regional co-ordinators, only one of the twelve positions on the executive was held by a rural representative prior to the 1995 election. The lack of an effective rural voice was reflected in this study's pre-election questionnaire. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that: "the Liberal Party in Manitoba is too strongly centered in Winnipeg and does not pay enough attention to its rural constituencies," over 51 per cent of constituency presidents agreed.⁶²

The need to provide rural members with fairer representation was partly addressed by alternating the location of large party functions, such as the AGM, between Brandon and Winnipeg. Emphasizing Brandon as an alternate location, given the city's importance as the centre of the province's western agricultural region, was intended to highlight the party's commitment to its rural roots. But with over three hundred delegates in attendance, the choice of location is largely a symbolic act, driven by the availability of hotel rooms and the cost to the delegates.⁶³ Brandon met these requirements because it had the sufficient accommodations and was within driving distance of Winnipeg.⁶⁴

Despite these attempts to broaden the party base, Provincial Councils and Annual General

⁶¹ Wearing, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁶² See Appendix A "Pre-election Questionnaire," Question 8.

⁶³ Interview, Monica Bell, *Office Manager, Campbell House*, February 23, 1995.

⁶⁴ In 1996 this tradition of alternating between Brandon and Winnipeg will change. Portage has been chosen as the location for the AGM.

Meetings have seldom fulfilled the participatory ideal envisioned for them. Their role may stagnate, especially between elections, when the leader and caucus are heavily occupied in legislative debates and dealing with the media. To avoid potentially embarrassing questions about party unity, the leadership has preferred safe, quiet and harmonious functions. This understandable desire to avoid stress can be at variance with constituency presidents who tend to favor more meetings, even if they reveal disagreement.⁶⁵

At the Annual General Meeting, prior to the 1995 election, not one of the positions on the executive was contested. Attendance at the Provincial Council was limited to fewer than sixty out of a possible two hundred. Most of those in attendance were nominated candidates and for some this was their first introduction to Liberal politics. After a morning session devoted to general party activities, during which heated discussion arose over an appeal for party members to take out L.A.M.P.⁶⁶ memberships as part of a fund-raising program, an afternoon session concentrating on the more volatile issue of health care was very dull.

At the Provincial Council after the 1995 election, attendance was not much better. One of the reports at this session was to have been the post-election questionnaire with a summary of comments by candidates and campaign chairs. At the last moment it was decided that this report would attract

⁶⁵ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," Question 25.

⁶⁶ Liberal Automatic Membership Program. Administered on a volunteer basis this program allows members to make automatic donations to constituency associations on a regular monthly schedule.

unfavorable media coverage, so only tabulated results were distributed.⁶⁷ Thus the image of party solidarity was maintained as a top priority.

Reporting to the Provincial Council, the Executive Committee or "advisory group" is another constitutionally sanctioned decision-making body. Its focus is also on the need to maintain party unity and avoid embarrassment. Prior to the 1995 election, for example, it stepped in to dictate a settlement within the Young Liberal Association. Using an article in its constitution that allowed for the impeachment of executive members, a small group within the association circulated a petition, citing financial improprieties. This controversy was more smoke than fire, and at other times seemingly minor matters like this could well be ignored, but with an election in the offing the Executive Committee took immediate action: its representative "read the riot act" to association members who then stopped all impeachment proceedings.

But while successful in this case, partly because the Young Liberal Association was relatively weak, the general effectiveness of the party executive remained questionable. Composed of twenty-nine members it included both federal and provincial representatives. Full attendance was rare. A quorum required only ten; and average attendance was usually about fifteen, with federal representatives among those who were most often absent.⁶⁸ The success of these meetings depended on co-operation and consensus, so full attendance was probably less important than the constructive dedication of those who did attend. But the lack of attendance probably pointed to a feeling, among some members at least that

⁶⁷ The full text of this report is provided in Appendix C.

⁶⁸ Interview, Zella Vermeulen, Party Secretary, Campbell House. February 6, 1995.

the proceedings were not always significant.

Moreover, the executive's accountability was also somewhat tenuous. Few positions on the executive had terms of reference that were sufficiently well defined; and some executive members evidently had little actual idea of what the responsibilities of their position involves. This became a focus of discussion at the post-election Provincial Council, for instance, when the new director of multiculturalism, lacking guidance from her predecessor, simply asked everyone what her role was supposed to be.

One clear purpose of the executive committee was to address regional concerns. To do this it included six Regional Co-ordinators representing four rural regions and two from Winnipeg.⁶⁹ This is another attempt to include a stronger rural presence in the party. Regional co-ordinators are also tasked with responsibility for ensuring the continuing operation of constituency associations. These duties however, conflict with those of the Director of Organization.⁷⁰ But in practice, little work is done in this area and Regional Co-ordinators resent reporting to the Director of Organization. It would be more logical not to include at least Winnipeg's co-ordinators on the executive, since lack of attendance by some rural co-ordinators, due in part to the distance they have to travel, sometimes makes these representatives more honorary than substantive. The two Winnipeg representatives, on the other hand, understandably

⁶⁹ The six regions are: North - representing the federal constituency of Churchill; South - representing the federal constituencies of Lisgar-Marquette and Brandon-Souris; East - representing the federal constituencies of Porvencher and Selkirk; West - representing the federal constituencies of Portage-Interlake and Dauphin-Swan River; Winnipeg North and Winnipeg South.

⁷⁰ Liberal Party in Manitoba, "1993 Constitution," Article 6, sections N and R, p. 6.

attend more often , and on an executive dominated by the urban party, they tilt urban bias even more.

These weaknesses were also sometimes compounded by a coffee-club atmosphere. For some members of the executive, social diversions appeared at times to have more attraction than party duties. But others conscientiously devoted countless hours of work, above and beyond the call of their normal duties. Their dedication ensured that the party continued to function even in the face of electoral disappointment, but it did nothing to broaden the base of the party.

Executive weakness was compensated for in part, by the management committee. This committee made many of the actual day-to-day decisions that directed party operations. The president also played a larger role in party administration than had originally been foreseen in the constitution. Working behind the scenes, these directors could compensate for the sometimes weak formal executive. But, they can also dominate the party, hindering some executive members' legitimate functions. Ideally, the role of the president was to respond to events and issues, effectively as the need arose.

During the 1995 election, however, the newly elected president, Ginny Hasselfield, was largely ignored. Partly this was the result of her being elected just two weeks prior to the election. But conflict over the policy process also contributed to this division. Neither could the past president Tim Ryan easily step in to play the role of peacemaker since he became a candidate. As tensions at campaign headquarters grew there was no one to defuse the situation and provide clear direction. This omission was critical since the legislative staff and the employees of Election Readiness Committee (ERC), who composed campaign central, had little first hand knowledge of party operations. In the months preceding the election many

would scramble to purchase party memberships so they could attend the AGM.

A legislative staff without a strong party affiliation was the result of the legitimate need for elected MLAs to represent their constituencies, and fight the political battle in the Legislative Assembly, not defend the interests of the party. A weak Young Liberal Association had also failed to produce the research and political talent needed to fill these legislative positions. In this context some Legislative staff largely ignored the sentiments of the general party membership. It was also a reflection of a division between elected representatives, preoccupied with legislative debates, and the general party membership who were thought to be looked after by the party's executive. Few MLAs took any active interest in party operations prior to the 1995 election.

Intimate knowledge of party organization by campaign during elections, however, is essential. As the campaign started and better organization became essential, these shortcomings had a high price. Key central campaign workers, for example, did not know which constituencies needed the French version of the "Red Book" even though Franco-Manitobans had traditionally been staunch Liberal supporters. In producing a full translation of the provincial "Red Book" organizers ignored the wishes of Manitoba's French community who had not thought a full translation was necessary.⁷¹ But, central campaign organizers went ahead with a full translation anyway. It was only when this translation was found to be inadequate did they insist a proper translation be completed.

Election staff were also largely ignorant of the depth of talent within the party and out of touch

⁷¹ Interview, Phillip Le Quere, St. Vital campaign manager, Oct 22, 1995.

with the party membership. Campaign suppliers appeared to have more impact and influence over some elements of the campaign than elected party officials. Having only met some of the "characters" that often appear at AGMs staff seemed to conclude that contact with the general membership was something they had to endure. When difficulties at campaign headquarters became evident, rather than accept help offered by Campbell House's office manager and volunteers they rejected it. These little differences, each in itself of seemingly trivial import, could have wider implications.

Petty conflicts also arose between opposing camps within the party and these continued during the election. For instance one candidate's supporters, in the last days of the campaign, produced buttons that indicated "WIN FACTOR 2," a reference to the candidate's winning not just his seat, but even the leadership of the party. Factions arose between federal and provincial politicians, between rural and urban representatives, or more often, arose out of conflicting personalities.

Such conflicts admittedly exist in any political party. Indeed, it would be more surprising if no conflict existed. But the problems of factionalism manifested itself in most aspects of Liberal operations. Divisions between candidates, campaign staff and party members were evident during the 1995 election campaign and a major stumbling block. No revised constitution could ever hope to eliminate this problem. Even so, there was room for improvement in Manitoba's constitution, especially in relation to defining the role of the executive. Another issue concerns the Election Readiness Committee (ERC): one of the major criticisms of the 1995 campaign was that it was "hijacked" by an ad hoc body that was undefined in the provincial constitution, and unprepared to adapt to the challenge of new technology or basic campaign organization.

3.3 THE INFORMATION HIGHWAY

Technology has had a tremendous impact on political parties, significantly changing many aspects of their organization. One primary example is that parties must now maintain and operate a computerized database and employ the staff to run it. In this context, information must now be regarded as a commodity to be managed. Computer technology is in the forefront of a revolution, significantly changing the way parties track and communicate with their membership. In Manitoba such technology made its first large scale appearance during the 1995 election, when all three parties competed in cyberspace. But the move in this direction had begun at least three decades earlier.

Starting in the 1960s, with reliable sample data, computers soon predicted the outcome of elections before the polls were closed.⁷² The first generation of computers had little impact on party structure because they were considered too complicated. Their use was limited to the pollster and his "medieval alchemy." But it was the pollsters' use of the computer that first opened the door to a marriage of technology and politics. Polling itself only became practical with the emergence of the computer's ability to store and retrieve data about the voter, including personal preferences, concerns, dislikes, attitudes and political inclination. This revolutionized political parties and how campaigns were run. The traditional party became an anachronism.⁷³ The party was no longer the sole means politicians had to gauge the mood of the electorate. Accordingly the use of computers during election campaigns came to be considered not only normal but absolutely essential.

⁷² Robert Mason Lee, One Hundred Monkeys: The Triumph of Popular Wisdom in Canadian Politics, (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross, 1989), pp. 33 - 34

⁷³ Ibid., p. 37.

Computer technology though developed rapidly and will no doubt continue to advance. The computing power of the Univac machine that accurately predicted the outcome of U.S. presidential campaigns in the 1960s is now surpassed by the desktop computer. And, no longer restricted to a few professionals or the pollster, most Liberal candidates during the 1995 election borrowed computers from their constituents. Like industries reliant on market research, political parties also quickly found other uses for this powerful tool. With large membership lists, computers were a useful tool for preparing renewal notices, soliciting donations and storing a members' personal information. The importance of this membership database cannot be underestimated: using direct mail, it becomes the party's primary means of communication with its membership.

The Liberal Party in Manitoba followed this trend and in the 1980s acquired a computer system and a database program. But its modernization then stalled. Based on a 386 file server, running version One of Novel NetWare, the custom designed membership, accounting and word-processing shell has been stretched to the limits.⁷⁴ Only two of the five original workstations remain functioning, casualties of age and misuse by well-meaning volunteers. In addition, only one terminal can currently be used to input data at any one time. This was a pressing problem during the 1993 leadership race and any time a large number of new memberships must be inputted.

The accuracy of the membership data is also in question. Since the party's administration is understaffed, inputting new memberships must often be assigned to volunteers who, by accident, can delete real members and create fictional constituencies: at one time one hundred and thirty seven

⁷⁴ Interview, Don Hillman, Executive Director Liberal Party in Manitoba, February 20, 1995.

members existed in fictional constituencies and there is no way to record how many members had accidentally been deleted. Neither is the current computer system cost effective. The program did not generate membership cards and tax receipts at the same time, so two letters had to be addressed and posted instead of one.

Direct mail, used to issue these membership cards and tax receipts, has long been demonstrated as a successful tool in the development of fund raising campaigns. In the U.S., direct mail campaigns had a tremendous impact on local and national politics, allowing interest groups and political parties to raise money and influence the political agenda. In Canada, the Progressive Conservative Party made extensive use of this tool for fund raising at both the national and provincial levels. In 1995 the Liberal campaign fund-raiser used similar methods, crafting a positive and personalized fund-raising letter.⁷⁵

In addition to fund-raising, the computers' ability to generate personalized mail has become an important tool during elections. In the 1990 campaign when Filmon met with groups, his aide took down names and the next day a personalized letter, like that from a friend, was in the mail;

So here he was speaking to you, almost as a friend, writing you a friendly letter and saying 'I know you're concerned about rising drug costs and here is what our government is going to do about it.'⁷⁶

Essentially, it is a feel-good gimmick designed to influence and manipulate voter opinion, intended to leave a positive impression. Such devices illustrate the growing, useful, and sometimes deceptive, role that

⁷⁵ Interview, Rod Zimmer, Liberal Fund raising Chairman, June 6, 1993.

⁷⁶ Richard Morgan, "Feel-good gimmicks," The Sun, March 29, 1995, p 4.

computer technology now plays in elections.

In the 1995 election the party's technical performance in the area of direct mail for anything more complicated than fund-raising was dismal. Contrary to statements in the press by Pat Onysko, the caucus Chief of Staff, Edwards never sent letters to seniors' homes, mimicking Filmon's tactics.⁷⁷ No system like this was in place during the election and the campaign itself had enough difficulties responding to calls from the public. Paradoxically, the campaign had rented computers that could have produced such letters with ease, but there never was any plan to communicate with voters in this manner. Computers at campaign headquarters, rented for thousands of dollars, were used as nothing more than glorified typewriters.

Between elections the Liberal party's application of direct mail was non-existent. Fund-raising lists, the key to generating personalized appeals for donations, are managed in a haphazard manner. There is no central administration. Each new Prime Minister's dinner committee, for example, starts over from scratch developing its own lists, duplicating hundreds of hours of work. Neither is information about party donors readily available from the current membership data base, partly because, while as an organization the party processes all provincial tax receipts, individual candidates often resent such knowledge being made available to other members of the party. This is a critical flaw in party organization since even if participatory democracy and its ideals are largely illusionary, money is not. It is the fundamental building block of any party or campaign.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

Individual campaigns, most notably Jim Woodman's campaign in Fort Garry, did make effective use of a computer program to focus a direct mail campaign.⁷⁸ Making use of obsolete 286s and a program called "pollstergeist" it started with a potential voter's phone call that led volunteers through questions about campaign issues they were concerned with, thus leading to a personalized letter from "Jim". It was a sophisticated use of computer technology on a shoestring budget because the designers had the expertise to make it work and the candidate had made the system part of his overall strategy.

While Woodman failed to win his seat, his campaign's use of technology far surpassed anything attempted by provincial organizers. They tried to develop a database program to help identify Liberal voters; but the "Marked List" program they developed was seriously flawed, wasting valuable time and energy.

The importance of computer technology during elections and in normal party operations is increasing but the Liberal party's attempts in Manitoba, thus far, have proven inadequate. In the short term, this had a limited impact on the 1995 campaign. Many of the problems the Liberals encountered extended not from technical difficulties but from more basic organizational difficulties. But in the long term, since the Progressive Conservative Party have already demonstrated a mastery of this technology, the party's future efforts, if it ignores these developments, may be seriously hindered.

In addition to identifying voters during elections, computers also opened up the possibility of a

⁷⁸ Bruce Owen, "Grit hoping idea computes: Fort Gary candidate befriends 'pollstergeist' in order to reach voters" Winnipeg Free Press, April 6, 1995, p. B3.

new level of communication.⁷⁹ The World Wide Web and the Internet are part of an electronic information revolution now allowing two way communications with the voter. Its importance during elections may in fact be slight. Its greatest application may be communicating with the voter once a candidate gets elected.⁸⁰ Using a home page and electronic mail, some provincial voters received party literature and policy information using a modem and phone lines during the 1995 election, in the convenience of their home. Federally, some Liberal MPs have made use of this technology but the party as a whole has generally been disinterested.

The New Democrats and Progressive Conservatives made extensive use of such technology during the election accessing home pages on Winnipeg's Freenet which they monitored on a regular basis. The Progressive Conservative Party even had an "Ask the Premier" page, which allowed members of the public to ask questions of Gary Filmon.⁸¹ Echoing their use of direct mail, it had the effect, however illusionary, of creating a personal connection with the premier.

The Liberal Party in Manitoba also had a home page on the Freenet but it failed to answer most questions posted on it. Three hundred and eighty four questions were received on the Liberal Home page in the first three weeks of the campaign, and, in a prime example of the poor planning characteristic of the problems the party faced, no one had been assigned to answer them. Part of the problem was that campaign headquarters did not have a modem. The phone system they chose also made it technically

⁷⁹ Bruce Owen, "It's not politics as usual: Campaigns in high-tech world of infobahn and focus groups," Winnipeg Free Press, March 25, 1995, p. A18.

⁸⁰ Interview, Jim Woodman, Candidate Fort Garry, March 8, 1995.

⁸¹ Owen, op. cit., A18.

impossible during the campaign to correct this because there were no separate outside lines.

The Liberal Party in Manitoba lost the battle for the electronic superhighway because it never understood or devoted resources to this new media. Its attempts at communicating with the electorate at this level were nothing more than second thoughts and not the product of an overall strategy. Characteristically, the party failed to recognize that such technology requires a high level of planning and administrative support, support the current administration, staff and equipment, already stretched to the limits, were unable to provide.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 CAMPBELL HOUSE

Named for Douglas L. Campbell, the last Liberal-Progressive Premier of Manitoba, Campbell House has become the permanent administrative home of the Liberal Party in Manitoba. Purchased by a group of dedicated Liberals in 1976, it has filled successive roles as offices for Fort Rouge and Osborne Constituency associations, and as Leader's Office and general headquarters.⁸² Presently its first floor includes a small library, leader's office and conference rooms; the second floor serving as party headquarter's offices, and the third floor is rented to university students, generating income during lean years.

As the party's administrative offices, Campbell House occupies an interesting position: a middle ground between elected representatives, the party's executive and general membership. Surprisingly, it has survived in this role even in the face of competing factions within the party, post-election debts and declining member interest. Its survival is a reflection of the party's strength, despite a boom and bust electoral history.

Key to its existence are the efforts of volunteers who help sustain the party's administration. But a volunteer administration could not keep up with the demands of a growing party. This was recognized during the 1990 provincial election and in 1993 a full-time Executive Director and later an Office Manager were hired to provide the accountability and continuity missing from volunteer efforts.

⁸² Gildas L. Molgat, "The History of Campbell House," 1995 AGM Directory.

This growth is a reflection of the evolving role of the party. Its traditional political roles have remained but the demands of a more democratic party has meant they have become involved in activities less conspicuously political.⁸³ Campbell House's role in this respect is primarily administrative rather than political; maintaining the membership list and distributing constituency and party notices. In this context its staff strives to remain aloof and separate from the factions within the party. They succeed by concentrating on the everyday business of the party and the often dirty and menial jobs of organizing for, and cleaning up after, committee chairs, official agents, and members of the executive.

It differs from individual constituency offices and the caucus staff because these are primarily political in orientation, responding to political demands of individual representatives. Campbell House's administrative duties serve the party and its membership as a whole.⁸⁴ The administrative functions of the party's headquarters thus strive to serve both federal and provincial wings of the party. In this process tasks include: maintenance of the membership list, general accounting, preparation and mailing of constituency notices, planning and organization of party functions, fielding inquiries from the general public, and offering support and advice to constituency associations. But, with only two full time employees, the executive director and office manager, human resources and equipment are stretched to the limits.⁸⁵

The party's administrative duties, though, are exhaustive; over 10,000 income tax receipts and

⁸³ Winn & McMenemy, eds., op. cit., p 167.

⁸⁴ Interview, Don Hillman, Executive Director, September 25, 1994.

⁸⁵ Gilroy, op. cit., p. 3.

membership cards are issued every year. This is a laborious and time consuming job made even more difficult by an aging computer system.⁸⁶ The majority of receipts average about \$15 dollars, the cost of a Liberal membership, and any donation over \$250 dollars must be reported to Elections Manitoba. The party headquarters keeps only ten per cent of funds raised by constituency associations for its administration.

Responsibility for the up-to-date maintenance of the membership database was more significant than it may seem. This database and Campbell House's limited direct mail capability are the party's primary tool for communicating with its membership. For example, it distributes constituency meeting and delegate selection notices, and influence over this medium carries real political power.

Candidates, executive members or general members can sell memberships, which gives every member the right to vote in meetings governed by the party. But if these memberships have not been received and processed by party headquarters at least fourteen days prior to the meeting, the new members are ineligible to vote.⁸⁷ This is particularly important to candidates seeking nominations, sometimes making the difference between success or failure. With membership costing only fifteen dollars a year a candidate can secure a nomination by selling as many memberships as possible. This practice is so common that insiders count the number of membership books given out as a method of gauging a candidate's political support.

⁸⁶ Interview, Don Hillman, Executive Director, Liberal Party in Manitoba, September 25, 1994.

⁸⁷ Liberal Party in Manitoba, 1993 Constitution. *op cit.*,

Fights over who is eligible to vote at nomination meetings sometimes arise, but are largely avoided by setting membership cutoff meetings.⁸⁸ These meetings bring together the competing camps for the purpose of setting the eligible voter list. The demands of party democracy, in this respect, was one of the reasons Campbell House exists as a neutral body within the party. Without the executive director to referee between competing camps, the whole process could disintegrate into mutually destructive bickering.

In the competition over membership recruitment, there are always losers who cite procedural improprieties in the administration of the rules and complain of favoritism. In practice, during the nomination meetings coming up to the 1995 election no favoritism was shown to potential candidates by the staff and volunteers of Campbell House. The responsibilities of monitoring such meetings, however, require the executive director and office manager to be tactful diplomats as well as competent administrators.

Outside their role as referee, however, the positions of executive director and office manager are by no means clearly defined. Subject to the executive, their efforts at providing the party with democratic, fair, efficient and cost effective management are sometimes ignored. Neither does the party make any particular effort to ensure any consistent administrative standards. The executive director has no centralized authority to dictate any consistent standards. When events like AGMs, leadership conventions or fund-raising dinners are held their organization usually becomes the responsibility of an appointed

⁸⁸ Interview, Monica Bell, Office Manager, May 6, 1995.

chairperson. This chairperson then organizes a committee and the committee undertakes the administration of that particular event.

Such a system works when a strong chairperson is chosen but, since these positions are often thought of as a means of maintaining a high profile within the party, this is not often the case. Not wanting to surrender any of the prestige or power that comes from running a successful event the chairpersons usually resent any administrative constraints on their activities.

Administration thus focuses on the chairperson's committee, usually composed of friends and supporters, who may or may not be competent. In some cases they may even demonstrate an unwillingness to follow administrative direction or even inform the executive director about their actions. Although the director is an ex officio member of all committees he is also subject to the executive, having little real authority to co-ordinate diverse strong-willed individualists. Thus, mundane administrative functions like bookkeeping and the issue of tax receipts often fall through the cracks, while the organizing skill of the party's full-time staff is under-utilized or ignored.

A case in point was the Election Readiness Committee (ERC) in the 1995 election. Its staff, in preparing for the 1995 election, ignored the executive director's recommendations. This created needless administrative and logistical problems during the election. Many of the problems the campaign faced were simple and Campbell House's professional administration would have eliminated them.

4.2 PARTY DEMOCRACY AND THE MODERN CAMPAIGN

Convinced during the 1960s that social change had outdistanced party organization, Liberals attempted to develop more democratic structures.⁸⁹ But democratization must be considered a continuing struggle against a return to a more hierarchical or elitist structure. Ironically, as the party attempted to integrate participatory decision making structures, campaign organization moved, out of necessity, towards a less egalitarian model.

This erosion of party democracy is partly a function of technology and the needs of the modern campaign. Television created the necessity for a highly focused and direct campaign message. This weakened the role of the membership in campaign strategy because media consultants with the technical skills necessary to use this technology preferred to enhance the role of the leader.⁹⁰ The image of leadership in this context has been a continuing theme in election campaigns. It is not surprising, therefore, that in addressing Edward's low media profile, the campaign ran pre-election commercials as a means of introducing Edwards to the electorate and that during the election, raising the media profile of the new provincial leader was one of their primary objectives.

The pollster, rather than the party's rank and file, now told politicians what shaped public opinion and television communicated this message to the voter. Allan Greg, a nationally recognized conservative pollster has commented on this modern trend:

It used to be an election was won by the ability to determine what the

⁸⁹ Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 72 - 89.

⁹⁰ Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

question was in the minds of the public... Now, through the technology of polling and television, it makes it increasingly able to set the question in the mind of the electorate - What they believe they'll be deciding on election day...⁹¹

The 1995 Liberal campaign would fail in this effort, spending most of its time and energy responding to negative media coverage.⁹² But shaping public opinion on election day, or any other day, is not a simple task. It requires enormous resources and exacting organization. One common method campaigns have adopted is the central campaign structure, responsible for the leader's tour, media communications and overall strategic planning. It is a centralized hierarchical structure, which requires a disciplined, flexible and experienced staff.

The national party creates this type of structure by having federal campaign chairs, appointed by the national leader, in each province.⁹³ The reasoning follows that a candidate, not the constituency association, chooses the campaign manager. Thus, while the provincial party represents both federal and provincial concerns, the federal campaign chair's responsibility is strictly federal. Structurally, this gives the federal campaign chair "some kind of unilateral monolithic control - at least for the purposes of a national campaign."⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 41.

⁹² Chris Saxberg, "Television News and the 1995 Provincial Election," (A Manitoba Legislative internship paper, September 1995.), p. 30.

⁹³ Liberal Party of Canada, Constitution, Amended at the 1990 National convention, section 14(3), p. 51.

⁹⁴ Liberal Party of Canada, vol. 728, File Federal Organization Confidential, Davey to Nichol, 31.1.66, cited in Joseph Wearing, The L Shaped Party: The Liberal Party of Canada 1958 - 1980, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1981) p. 30.

This model was duplicated in Manitoba, leading to the creation of the ERC. In 1995, standing as almost a separate body, it had virtually complete control over resources, including its own staff, controlled its own separate campaign funds, and was held accountable only to the leader. As a result of its monolithic control and dismal results ERC would be heavily criticized by some party members for its lack of direction, poor campaign strategy, and condescending attitude after the election:

The central campaign strategy was non-existent, there was no linkage of issues, no marketing of the Liberal team. The central campaign team was arrogant and condescending creating a divisiveness never before seen in a campaign.⁹⁵

Other members expressed their deep sense of betrayal: they accepted the necessity for an ERC type organization but were offended by its lack of professionalism. Some saw it, regardless of success or failure, as an oddity in a party avowedly committed to participatory democracy, particularly because it is not mentioned in the party's provincial constitution.

But modern campaigns will continue to require centralized decision-making. Extensive consultation procedures will have to be sacrificed in order to react quickly to unforeseen events and potentially divisive issues. Instant campaign decisions needed to deliver a direct and focused campaign, would probably be impossible inside a more democratic decision-making structure. By necessity, this dictates that participatory democracy is often sacrificed in the name of electoral success. The needs of the modern campaign, however, have not led to the extinction of participatory democracy. The reforms led by Keith Davey have had a tremendous impact on the provincial party. Sometimes, these are circumvented by elites, but an active membership is still the key to ensuring the electoral success.

⁹⁵ See Appendix B, "Post-Election Questionnaire," Response to question 18.

4.3 CONSTITUENCY ASSOCIATIONS

A Liberal constituency association represents each provincial electoral division within the province of Manitoba. These can be powerful political bodies. At the local level they select and nominate candidates to stand for election and elect delegates to provincial conventions. They are also the base on which strong community ties and continuing electoral support are developed.

A training ground for future party officials and a stepping stone to higher office, constituency associations are the basic unit from which the party is built. The nomination and election of constituency officers and delegates is the most basic exercise in party democracy. In practice, however, constituency associations may fail to live up to the ideals of democratic theory.

In Manitoba, a quick look at constituency presidents and their executives indicates very little in the way of personnel change. As a result, in 1995, they comprised an elderly group whose average age was fifty-seven.⁹⁶ This can be attributed to a lack of willing volunteers, which often leads to stagnation. An effective constituency association requires many hours of arduous effort with few tangible benefits. One campaign manager described his executive and their impact on his 1995 campaign in these terms:

We could not get an active executive. Those on the (constituency) executive are out of touch because of age. Somehow (we) need to get younger participation or maybe the party should pick someone to run in this area.⁹⁷

For a party that has not held provincial power since 1958, it is especially important to attract new, younger and presumably more energetic and innovative members that are essential for organizational renewal. The

⁹⁶ See Appendix A, "Pre-election questionnaire," Question 1.

⁹⁷ See Appendix B, "Post-Election Questionnaire," Question 18.

Progressive Conservatives and New Democrats accomplished this by supporting active university political associations. The Liberal party has no such training grounds. They may exist on paper, but they do very little to attract and keep new members.

Some strong constituency associations do exist. In Tuxedo, for example, strong candidates have consistently been nominated to run against Premier Gary Filmon, undiscouraged by the apparently slim hope of victory. Others, however, have degenerated into little more than oligarchic fiefdoms: their elections follow a democratic form, but real competition and change seem to be discouraged.

There are no limits on how long a member can hold the position of president or any position within a constituency association. Neither are they required to be particularly active. The only demands placed on association executives is that they hold a constituency meeting "no less than 10 months or more than 18 months after the previous meeting."⁹⁸ In effect, this meeting is called at the president's convenience, subject only to fourteen days notice as required by the constitution. But, rules can be broken; one president held an emergency meeting of the constituency executive, without notifying rivals on the executive; and the meeting, when questioned by party officials, also lacked any minutes.

Such anomalies are symptomatic of organizational decline. But, hard data on constituency associations is difficult to obtain; their weakness, however, is periodically revealed.⁹⁹ For example, in

⁹⁸ Liberal Party in Manitoba, "1993 Provincial Constitution," Article 4, Section F, p. 2.

⁹⁹ The party keeps no permanent records on the activities of constituency associations. Neither are these associations required to report any activities other than who is on its executive.

Such records that do exist like the minutes of constituency meetings are usually kept with the

(continued...)

1981 the Liberal party failed to nominate candidates in eighteen constituencies. From this low point, constituency strength has grown and in the 1988, 1990 and 1995 provincial elections the party routinely nominated candidates in all fifty-seven electoral divisions.

The party can by no means be complacent about this success. Although it ran fifty-seven candidates in 1995, six of these were nominated after the writ was dropped. Reasons for this vary but in each case the constituency association failed to have nominated candidates in place prior to an expected election. In one rural constituency the party even found it necessary, because there was no interested candidate, to assure a candidate of some financial support. Neither can it be assumed that constituency associations automatically give financial or other support to the candidate nominated in their constituency. In written comments in response to the statement "The 1995 provincial election was lost at the constituency level" three candidates indicated they felt their constituency association did little to assist them. This is a serious problem. Liberal losses in the 1990 election were partly attributed to weak constituency associations.¹⁰⁰

When candidates, campaign managers, official agents and volunteers were asked in a post election questionnaire to comment on possible reasons why the Liberal party lost the 1995 provincial election the overwhelming consensus was that the campaign was lost at the provincial, rather than constituency level.¹⁰¹

(...continued)

secretary.

¹⁰⁰ Carstairs, *op. cit.*, p.133.

¹⁰¹ See Appendix C, "Report to the Provincial Council" Question 17 & 18, June 24, 1995.

An urban candidate best summed it up:

We started high in the Polls. By the time the news media had highlighted our blunders in getting the central campaign office operating, the Morgantaler Clinic gaffe, a shifting campaign focus and surprise policy announcements like tax freezes we had no where to go but down. We never effectively criticized the PC government. We left this to the NDP, and they did.¹⁰²

But comments like these should be viewed with some apprehension since human nature being what it is, a losing candidate or a disgruntled volunteer is not an impartial judge. It should also be noted that the 1990 loss was also blamed, by some, on a poorly run central campaign.

In response to a pre-election questionnaire, constituency presidents indicated they felt the party was weakest at the constituency level and when asked in the post-election questionnaire what their campaign's biggest problem was, fifty per cent of the respondents indicated a lack of volunteers.¹⁰³ Such responses indicate that at the constituency level the party has significant problems. Recruiting volunteers is not the responsibility of the central campaign. In the post election questionnaire, when questioned about when their constituency started fund raising activities, many left this critically important task until the last moment. Some even felt this was the responsibility of the candidate. Undoubtedly, lack of preparation in this area contributed to the Liberal collapse in 1995.

It would be unfair however to place blame for the 1995 defeat only on the backs of weak constituency organizations. They are only one part of a larger election strategy: their job during the election is a relatively simple one of ensuring that the candidate gets out into the community knocking on

¹⁰² See Appendix B "Post-election Questionnaire," Survey Response to question 17.

¹⁰³ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," Question 8.

doors, identifying the Liberal vote, and on election day ensuring that voters get to the polls. It is neither a glamorous nor overly complicated process. Most constituencies, even facing a lack of volunteers, were able to complete this task, sometimes even increasing their vote, but felt let down by the central campaign.

We realize that we live in a very strong PC constituency but we tripled the vote over the 90 election. I feel that if the central campaign had been stronger it would have brought us within striking distance...¹⁰⁴

This general theme was echoed throughout the post election questionnaire, but specifically they felt that the central campaign failed to communicate with constituencies.

Thus, while 43 per cent of the respondents indicated a lack of volunteers as the major problem affecting their campaign, the second largest response, indicated lack of policy information had a significant impact on their campaign.¹⁰⁵ This was the responsibility of the ERC and its campaign staff, but rather than help local campaigns they failed to communicate with them. The problems afflicting the Liberal party however cannot be neatly summed up as a lack of strong constituency organization or a weak central campaign. These are symptoms of decay and do little to address the problem itself: a provincial party that in 1995 was relatively isolated and divided, unable to integrate rural or ethnic voices within its structure.

4.4 LIBERAL MEMBERSHIP

While the Liberal Party in Manitoba once faced a declining membership, this trend now appears to have been reversed, at least in the short term. In 1994 new memberships increased by over six

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," Question 18.

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix B, "Post-Election Questionnaire," Question 12.

thousand.¹⁰⁶ The accuracy of this figure is questionable, given the party's aging computer system, but since 1981 the party has been able to mount provincial campaigns in 1988, 1990 and 1995. This at least indicates that interest in the Liberal party, prior to the 1995 election, was apparently growing.

This can be attributed to a number of factors. Provincially, Sharon Carstairs' efforts at rebuilding constituencies built a solid core of supporters. Federally, some growth in membership may also be partly due to the Liberal success in the 1993 election. It would be a mistake to attribute the victory in 1993 to a resurgence of Liberalism, some observers attribute the victory to a conservative collapse.¹⁰⁷

The process of nominating candidates for the 1995 campaign also attracted a large new membership. This breathed new life into some moribund constituencies, but its long term effect may prove negligible if these new members cannot be integrated into the Party. The need to retain these new members is especially acute in constituencies with large visible minorities and in rural areas, if only to help offset the image, and to a degree, the reality, that the party has been dominated in recent years by a narrowly based urban, federally oriented elite.

This is a pressing problem. One of the most common complaints leveled at the 1995 campaign was that decision making was limited to those without campaign experience but deemed acceptable to the party's urban establishment.

¹⁰⁶ Brian Head, Director of membership "Report to the 1995 AGM" April 10, 1995.

¹⁰⁷ David McLaughlin, The Poisoned Chalice: The last campaign of the Progressive Conservative Party, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994), pp. 299 - 304.

The Election Readiness Committee operated as an exclusive little group... and as it turned out one with limited ability.¹⁰⁸

In part, this suspicion arose because most staff and some senior party officials lived in or near River Heights, an affluent neighborhood south of the Assiniboine river, adjoining the suburbs of Fort Garry to the South, and Tuxedo-Charleswood to the west. Drawing staff from this shallow pool left rural constituencies and the city's north end feeling neglected. It also ignored party members with valuable campaign experience because they did not fit neatly within what critics have called the "champagne and cocktails crowd." And sadly, while constituencies are relatively weak, in preparation for the campaign this group often assumed the worst about local constituencies, discounting local effort unduly. Such attitudes only increased the lack of communication and mistrust generated by the central campaign.

This resentment was echoed in the pre-election questionnaire. Asked to agree or disagree with the statement that the: "Liberal Party in Manitoba is too strongly centered in Winnipeg and does not pay enough attention to its constituency associations," 27 per cent agreed with the statement and 24 per cent agreed somewhat with the statement.¹⁰⁹ A significant number of respondents, 34 per cent, also agreed that the party executive does not listen to constituency associations enough.¹¹⁰ Attitudes like these, reflected in both the pre and post-election questionnaires, indicate deep dissatisfaction within the party. Not surprisingly then, when asked what the most important issue facing the Liberal Party in Manitoba was, 27 per cent indicated, although this response was not asked for, that the most pressing need was for re-

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix B, "Post-election Questionnaire," Survey response to question 17.

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," Question 12.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," Question 24.

organization and a return to the party's grassroots:

The Liberal party should try to become a provincial party rather than a Winnipeg centered party... The party will have to listen to the people. The candidates and volunteers are the people who vote. As long as we rely on a few experts who do not venture out into the real world, for our policies and strategy they will be ineffective and our party will be ineffective.¹¹¹

One result of this narrow base was the under-representation of both ethnic and rural representatives on both strategy and operation committees. This despite the fact that Philippine, Vietnamese, Sikh and other communities are active within constituency associations. It was no accident that two of three Liberal MLAs who won in 1995 had large and supportive ethnic minorities in their constituencies. During the election, campaign central was unable or unwilling to respond directly to these communities.

Rural representatives were also absent from the central campaign. This was devastating because gun control, which finds its strongest opposition in rural areas, became an important issue. With the strategy committee only representing the urban party, this was a narrow base from which to make strategy decisions that would affect a provincial campaign.

With this rather narrow base, it is not surprising there were problems attracting and keeping a youth membership. Most volunteers at the constituency level were over forty and the Young Liberals of Manitoba during the campaign were conspicuous by their absence.¹¹² Young Liberal blitz teams that were to canvass constituencies either didn't show up or showed up in such small numbers as to make them

¹¹¹ See Appendix B, "post-election Questionnaire." Survey response to Question 20.

¹¹² See Appendix B "Post-Election Questionnaire" Question 7.

useless. This in fact should not be surprising since they learned their organizing skills from the senior party. Operating as a social clique, they show up at party functions, demand a say in party activities but do little to earn it. Individually some campaigns had younger volunteers, but these were attracted by the individual candidates, not through the efforts of the Young Liberals of Manitoba.

All these failures created obstacles that the party could not surmount during the thirty-five day campaign. The party's leadership, after Carstairs, made little effort to reach out to rural, ethnic or other communities that were alienated by the Filmon government's cutbacks. This undercut her earlier success at grassroots campaigning and broadening the party foundation. As the base narrowed and constituency associations weakened, the top heavy executive, largely out of touch with the general membership, toppled over. The weak central campaign was only a symptom of this decay.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 HIGH HOPES AND THE POLLS

On the morning of March 21, 1995 Premier Gary Filmon dropped the provincial writ that began Manitoba's thirty-sixth provincial election. On that first day, in spite of problems evident within the party, the Liberal campaign started on a promising note; the party was high in the polls, had a slate of strong candidates and a young energetic leader. It fully expected to make its long awaited electoral breakthrough.¹¹³ The Liberal campaign chair, Allister Gunson, even predicted a minority government:

**In our calculation, we have enough seats to form a minority government.
What we have to work on is forming a majority.**¹¹⁴

It was not an unrealistic assessment. Not since 1966 had Manitobans elected a government to a third term in office and Filmon appeared unlikely to break this record. The NDP, with Gary Doer as leader, were considered by the campaign team a very real threat, but in a period of fiscal restraint and with an electorate that seemed to be moving to the right, the traditional NDP policy of spending more public money seemed unlikely to attract voters.¹¹⁵

The Liberal sweep of Manitoba federal ridings in the 1993 election also added to the hopes of victory in the 1995 campaign. Outside of the party, this optimism was reflected in the business community who sought to make valuable political connections within a resurgent Liberal party that could possibly form the next government. The leader's fund-raising dinner, for example, was sold out. At a cost of one

¹¹³ Lang, *op cit.*, p. 109.

¹¹⁴ Richard Morgan, "Get set for battle of political slogans" *The Winnipeg Sun*, March 22, 1995, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ Editorial, "A mandate with limits," *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 22, 1995, p. A6.

hundred dollars, eleven hundred tickets were sold, mostly to private enterprise. The demand was so great two hundred extra seats had to be set up. Guests evidently felt the Liberal party were becoming a viable political alternative to Filmon's Progressive Conservatives.

Within the party this sense of optimism was even stronger. After decades of lost hopes there were high expectations: Carstairs' 1988 success was on everyone's mind. The disappointing 1990 election result was thought to have been an aberration resulting from "a campaign that was a disaster from start to finish."¹¹⁶ According to Patti Stewart, the 1995 campaign director, this campaign would be different, better organized and better run. The ERC had a year to prepare and Gunson even commented at the Annual General Meeting, the party was "ready to go."¹¹⁷ That may have been the case, but Gunson's critics, after the election, questioned if he knew what direction he was supposed to go in.

A joint Angus Reid-CBC poll released on the first day of the campaign also showed the Liberals running two points behind Filmon's Progressive Conservatives at thirty-five per cent. The party's own polls two weeks earlier placed them ahead of both the NDP and PCs.¹¹⁸ But, while Liberal support was high it was not very strong. Fifty-three percent of respondents indicated their support for the Liberals was not very certain.¹¹⁹ A central campaign with a strong focused message would be essential if the party wanted to secure these voters. But even in a worst case scenario, knowledgeable observers expected the party to

¹¹⁶ Carstairs, *op cit.*, p. 175.

¹¹⁷ Allister Gunson, Liberal Campaign Chair, Opening remarks to the 1995 AGM, March 11, 1995.

¹¹⁸ Interview, Scott Mackay, President Probe Research. June 12, 1995.

¹¹⁹ Paul McKie, "Grits on PCs' tail, poll shows" Winnipeg Free Press, March 23, 1995, p B3.

maintain the status quo.¹²⁰

5.2 POLICY & PLATFORM

One of the cornerstones of the 1995 Liberal campaign was the Liberal Plan for Manitoba. This booklet brought together in one document an outline of Liberal policies. It was a strategy borrowed from the successful 1993 federal campaign. At that time the national party had produced the "Red Book," a detailed plan of what federal Liberals hoped to achieve as the next government of Canada. Following the same model, Edwards produced a provincial version that highlighted programs in the areas of jobs and economic growth, education, justice, and agriculture. Its official title was the Liberal Plan for Manitoba but it came to be known as "Son of Red Book."

Seventy-eight pages in length, longer than the federal version, the "Son of Red Book" was the 1995 campaign's primary piece of election literature. On one level it was a marked success, serving as an effective campaign prop: holding it up to the camera during the televised leaders' debate, Edwards conveyed the image, seldom achieved during the campaign, that his leadership had substance backed by sound policies. The next day in an editorial the Winnipeg Free Press acknowledged Edwards as the winner of the debate.¹²¹ It was a high point of the campaign.

As the party's major policy statement, the booklet was a critical factor in trying to convince the media and the electorate that Liberals were a viable alternative. Filmon's avoidance of legislative sessions

¹²⁰ Interview, Ernie Gilroy, St. James Campaign Manager, May 29, 1995.

¹²¹ Editorial, "The edge to Edwards," Winnipeg Free Press, April 13, 1995, p. A6.

had only given Edwards limited exposure in the media, a spotlight shared with the NDP. The Liberal Plan for Manitoba was one element in a plan to raise his media profile and the credibility of the Liberal party. It was successful in this respect, passing what Edwards' executive assistant Bill Macdonald called the media "sniff test." The Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party would of course ridicule the book, and the media gave it intense scrutiny but it was generally well accepted.¹²²

Its development however was costly, representing hundreds of hours of research, a tremendous effort for a party that did not have the resources available to the Progressive Conservatives or the New Democrats. Ideally, this commitment might have produced the same success Frank McKenna achieved in New Brunswick in 1990 when his caucus, with input from special interest groups, produced twenty-two draft policy papers. These in turn comprised the start of a continuing process that ultimately included ideas from outside of the party as guidance for McKenna's platform committee. A national Liberal analyst later noted that the policy papers were an asset:

Over about two years the policy committee of 20 noted New Brunswickers became 75, and interest group leaders when phoned with the media question "What does Frank McKenna stand for?" were able to answer citing a draft policy paper just sent to them for comment!¹²³

In contrast, Manitoba's policy process appeared to lack an overall design. Started by the Election Readiness policy subcommittee, chaired by Ginny Hasselfield, and finished by Paul Edwards and the caucus research staff, the process floundered. Policy papers produced by the subcommittee were rejected

¹²² Bruce Owen, "Edwards promises Surplus Vows to trim fat from cabinet" The Winnipeg Free Press, April 1, 1995, p. A17.

¹²³ Richardson, op. cit., p. 3.

by Edwards on the grounds that they were inappropriate and of limited value. Some were well-researched, but others, in the estimation of some observers, were too academic and poorly written, and at times contradicted Liberal policy. Rather than reflecting expertise available from interest groups, they seemed to lack even accurate information: in the words of one MLA who commented on the authors of these papers: "it became apparent after five minutes they did not know what they were talking about."

Hampered by a lack of input from these papers the policy process then centered on Edwards and his legislative staff. There followed a series of candidate policy forums, but these were unconnected to the party's grassroots. One disappointed Liberal felt that there was not enough opportunity for members to express their views:

The Leader came to a meeting of four candidates in the area... Paul spoke a lot. He had his executive assistant speak quite a while and the candidates sat and listened... Finally the candidates got to comment! Only briefly on the positions taken by Paul in response to questions. I did not join the party to hear the executive assistant speak!¹²⁴

In the end, after seven drafts, the legislative research staff put together a policy outline largely provided by Edwards himself. Edwards and the legislative research staff had the ability to produce this policy document but during preparation they would be distracted by the more pressing demands of a legislative session. Their influence over policy production also closed a loop that inhibited input from the party membership.

Edwards would draw some criticism for his heavy handed tactics surrounding the authorship of

¹²⁴ See Appendix B "Post-Election Questionnaire," Question 17.

the Liberal Plan for Manitoba. Several candidates felt he had betrayed his promise to produce a center-left document. The campaign's heavy opening focus on gambling was also criticized for failing to attract sufficient momentum. Some observers felt that this policy was more a reflection of Edwards' own personal views on the subject and not that of the general party. Such criticisms however are hard to evaluate as they depend on subjective preferences. It is also difficult to criticize Edwards for subverting the policy process because one did not exist prior to his efforts at creating one for the 1995 campaign. On the other hand others conceded Edwards' influence over policy was within his prerogative as leader, and Carstairs had exercised similar influence.

One glaring flaw in the Liberal Plan for Manitoba was the proposal to eliminate \$1.7 million in government subsidies to horse racing. The Liberal party had not taken a position against horse racing. They didn't have a horse racing policy. The party's researchers however had neglected to investigate the ramifications of ending the subsidy. Television news coverage of this mistake, which estimated job losses as high as 1,000, contradicted one of the campaign's major platforms: job creation.¹²⁵

In spite of these controversies the Liberal Plan for Manitoba was generally judged by respondents to a post-election questionnaire as having had a positive impact, although this was offset by slow production and circulation:

Policy information was too late in getting into circulation. Candidates were not knowledgeable on our policies in the earlier part of the campaign, therefore were

¹²⁵ Saxberg, op. cit., p. 31.

unable to debate with the opposition.¹²⁶

The lack of timely policy information during the campaign was one of the campaign's greatest flaws. Without a clear policy message available early in the planning stages of the campaign it was impossible to plan an effective leader's tour. This meant that Paul Edwards would "wing it" through most of the campaign and this had devastating effects. Many of the post-writ policy announcements, such as freezing Winnipeg's municipal taxes, were made on the fly. These were touted as bold initiatives but in reality they became desperate attempts to grab media attention because the campaign had failed to come up with anything better. The end result was to make Edwards and the campaign look unprofessional and untrustworthy to the media and the voting public.

Volunteers answering questions about Liberal policy during the campaign were also left defenseless. This was because a separate policy handbook with talking points and research notes on the Liberal Plan for Manitoba, necessary to answer questions from the public, was never produced. Such a handbook was a feature of the 1988 and 1990 campaigns. Without it, in the first ten days of the campaign, before the Liberal Plan for Manitoba was released, volunteers and candidates answering policy questions were left to their own devices. A brochure outlining the major points contained in the Red Book was delivered to constituencies ahead of time but this was scarcely sufficient when defending difficult policy positions. An impressive media booklet, outlining the party's standing in all 57 constituencies, was produced but since the campaign could not follow up on this effort by answering questions from reporters, its production was largely a waste of time.

¹²⁶ See Appendix B, "Post Election Questionnaire," Question 12.

Diversity and division over policy questions is not new: as the avowed party of the center, Liberals periodically have to wrestle with divergent voices that range from left to right. Dissent within a democratic party is understandable and should be welcomed. But what was clearly unwelcome was the avoidable difficulty in getting information about Liberal policy to members, candidates and voters when it was needed.

When questioned about their political leanings, constituency association presidents generally reflected this diversity of views on policy. Asked if they felt their interests were best represented by the left or right wing of the Liberal party, the most typical response was uncertainty.¹²⁷ When asked specific questions about issues such as same sex benefits for homosexual couples, or about discrimination against natives and women, there was little consensus. There is some support in the data to suggest that a center-left position was the most popular but it seems likely that many Liberals do not hold any strong ideological commitments. Policy issues were more likely judged individually. Three issues that became particularly contentious during the thirty-sixth provincial election were abortion, gun control and a proposed new arena for the Winnipeg Jets hockey team.

5.3 GUNS, ABORTION & HOCKEY

Within the first week, the campaign organizers attempted to correct the shortage of policy information. A series of short one page policy statements, hastily prepared by a legislative intern, were compiled and distributed. These never filled the need for a more comprehensive explanation of Liberal policy but did help identify Liberal positions on gun control, abortion and the Jets-arena issue. Even so,

¹²⁷ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," See Questions 2, 20, 23 & 26.

these three issues had a devastating impact on the course of the campaign, despite the fact they were partly or primarily the political responsibility of federal or municipal levels of government. A provincial Liberal response was more an exercise in positioning rather than policy.

Gun control became controversial when the federal Liberal Minister of Justice, Allan Rock, introduced a bill requiring gun registration. Charged with emotion, it was an issue that divided the federal and provincial parties alike. Rural Manitobans in particular felt the bill threatened their way of life. Forcing them to register guns, for which they had legitimate uses, seemed to place an extra financial burden on rural Canadians. They also expressed fears that this bill was only the first step towards banning firearms altogether.

Three of Manitoba's rural MPs would vote against the bill and were termed "Outlaw Grits."¹²⁸ They would be censured by the party whip and threatened with loss of committee memberships. These threats would not materialize but provincially at least one rural candidate felt the federal party had destroyed their chances at victory:

...The federal government did much to destroy the provincial liberal party. When the Prime Minister punished the three MPs for voting against gun registration - many rural people lost confidence in the name Liberal. "Dictatorship" has never been admired...¹²⁹

The provincial Liberal party supported gun control but stressed it was a federal concern. Having made the strategic decision to remain closely associated with the federal party, it would have been difficult

¹²⁸ Dan Lett, "Outlaw Grits say no to party's gun bill," Winnipeg Free Press, April 6, 1993. p. A3.

¹²⁹ See Appendix B, "Post-Election Questionnaire," Response to question 17.

for Edwards to take any other position. The urban based caucus also felt strongly that gun control was a positive issue they should be associated with. In essence the campaign would be criticised for standing up for what it believed in. Unfortunately, the introduction of the federal gun control bill seemed to harken back to the Trudeau era: an out-of-touch eastern "establishment" enacting legislation that fueled the west's resentment of central Canada.

Abortion, like gun control, was also considered a federal concern and not expected to be an issue in the 1995 campaign. On the second day of the campaign Paul Edwards visited Corydon Avenue, in south-central Winnipeg in search of votes. This was not the type of staged event that makes the candidate look good. Edwards' handlers lack a strong local knowledge of the location or they would have been aware that Winnipeg's most controversial abortion clinic was on the same block. With reporters present to document the mishap, Edwards was met on the street by the Morgantaler clinic's executive director who asked questions about the Liberal policy on abortion. Feeling ambushed, Edwards first appeared to support provincial funding for abortion clinics then seemed to backed away from his statements. On the news that night Edwards looked like a politician caught with his pants down and the print media played the theme he had done a "flip flop."¹³⁰ It was a bad start and it forced the campaign into dealing with abortion as an issue. The faltering response was further muddled by factions within the party.

While the party officially supported abortion, this position was challenged by at least one constituency executive who nominated an anti-abortion candidate in the Winnipeg suburb of Transcona. This was Ingrid Pokrant, the Executive Director of Alliance Action, a national, non-profit, anti-abortion

¹³⁰ Bruce Owen, "Grits abortion flip-flop," Winnipeg Free Press, April 25, 1995, p. A1.

group. Her position, highlighted in The Winnipeg Sun, wanted Liberals to "take a stronger stand on abortion - by becoming the anti-abortion party."¹³¹ In the same story, Pat Onysko, the caucus chief of staff attempted to lessen Pokrant's impact by stressing that if elected, these views could be brought forward in caucus.¹³² This only succeeded in making Edwards appear more indecisive, alienating pro-choice groups.

The third problem area for the Liberals was the Jets-arena issue. In 1995 the City of Winnipeg faced the difficult decision of building a new arena and keeping its professional NHL team, the Winnipeg Jets, or seeing the team move to another city, probably in the United States. To build an arena though, estimated at a cost of over \$110 million, the city, province and federal governments all had to agree to cover the costs of construction and possible indeterminate financial losses in the future.

In a public questionnaire prepared by the Liberal caucus, 76 per cent, when asked if they supported the government contributing tax dollars to a new arena, responded "No".¹³³ The same attitude was almost as strong within the party: according to the pre-election questionnaire, 55 per cent of the respondents agreed "any new arena in Winnipeg should be built without public money."¹³⁴ But support for a new arena built with government money was intense among hockey fans and members of the business community who emphasized that the continuing presence of the Jets was important to the city's future.

¹³¹ Richard Morgan, "Grit wants spotlight on abortions," The Winnipeg Sun, March 26, 1995, p. 4.

¹³² Ibid., p. 4.

¹³³ Unpublished brochure, Listening to Manitobans: a report from the Manitoba Liberal Caucus.

¹³⁴ See Appendix A, "Pre-Election Questionnaire," Question 17.

One concerned citizen summarized the emotional need to keep Winnipeg's NHL team:

The Winnipeg Jets are important to the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba. The Jets give Winnipeggers a sense of pride in their city. Having an NHL franchise is something that makes Winnipeg a big city.¹³⁵

Such unreserved support for the Jets may not have represented the majority, but it had a perceptible presence throughout the campaign. It is even possible public opinion turned 180 degrees during the campaign. The most numerous comments on the Liberal home page and calls to the campaign headquarters were in support of a new arena and keeping the Jets in Winnipeg. This support reached its zenith after the election when a local radio station started a save the Jets campaign. Sports writers, hockey fans and prominent citizens all urged politicians during the campaign to help "Save the Jets."

Notwithstanding the emotion surrounding the issue, the Liberal position on the new arena was complicated by a number of factors. Support for the project was characterized by an ad hoc anti-arena group known as Thin Ice as an expensive establishment proposal likely to cost property tax-payers more than they could afford.¹³⁶ This put the Liberals in a dilemma. If they refused to support the Jets, they would be condemned by the media, especially in the sports pages. But if they supported the Jets by promising public money for a new arena, they could equally be condemned by the public for betraying the taxpayer.

An additional difficulty was that Edwards was not sure about federal support, a key ingredient if

¹³⁵ Letter to the Editor, "If NHL team leaves, city likely won't get together, We need Jets, new arena," Winnipeg Free Press, April 17, 1995, p. A7.

¹³⁶ "No Thaw on Arena, Thin Ice says." The Winnipeg Free Press, April 1, 1995, p. B3.

any new arena was to be built.¹³⁷ If provincially the Liberals openly supported the arena, it would have been particularly embarrassing if the federal government didn't support the deal. The Liberal response questioned Filmon's unconditional support for the Jets, illustrated by the 1992 loss agreement which had the potential to expose taxpayers to unlimited losses, but promised some public money by foregoing provincial taxes on the construction of a new arena. A statement that the Liberal party was specifically opposed to a new arena built with taxpayer's money was never made. This it was hoped would protect the party from negative publicity in the press and intense opposition from Jets fans, while at the same time keep a discreet distance from expensive commitments as yet far from clear in the ongoing negotiations about the Jets' long term future. Such a position tried to please both sides, yet satisfied neither.

After the election the Filmon government increased its financial support for a new arena. Confidential financial plans submitted by pro-arena groups prior to the election seemed to have expected this level of provincial support.¹³⁸ How much Filmon knew and what deals were made behind closed doors is difficult to assess. It was evident, however, that pro-Jets organizations did target the Liberal party, particularly during the last few days of the campaign, as many Liberal candidates complained of a phone campaign that targeted their constituencies.¹³⁹ In a devastating whisper campaign, Jets supporters were contacted in Liberal constituencies and the party's position was criticized as anti-arena, anti-Jets. This assault was difficult, if not impossible, to counteract. It probably lost the party support, especially among those who wanted a clearer, more generous, public commitment to help "Save the Jets." It was the 1995

¹³⁷ Paul Edwards, Interview, Leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba, June 1, 1995.

¹³⁸ Government of Manitoba "Hansard Debates and proceedings," October 20, 1995.

¹³⁹ See Appendix A, "Post-election Questionnaire," Question 15.

version of Meech Lake. The Liberal party had again stumbled onto an issue which their critics used to make them look indecisive and weak.

5.4 THE MEDIA & THIRD PARTY ADVERTISING

The emotional impact of the Jets-arena issue on the electorate was difficult to assess. Scott Mackay, president of Probe Research, a company used by the Liberals to conduct rolling polls during the campaign, noted that damage was unavoidable:

When you get a split like this ... it becomes something politicians don't want to touch... it becomes like abortion - you're going to alienate as many people as you are going to impress.¹⁴⁰

Many Liberals understood this but seemingly could do nothing about it: it was a no win issue.

Health care had been identified as one issue the Liberals could have possibly used, but since the NDP had demonstrated during by-elections they could dominate this issue party strategists preferred to attack on a different front. Thus Liberal strategy focused on more familiar issues such as jobs, the economy, and education. The caucus felt more comfortable with these areas, which had been identified in advance of the election as being important to Manitobans.¹⁴¹

These issues, along with the Jets-arena question, all occupied a central role in the campaign. They received constant attention in the press, and on radio and television. An unpublished analysis of this

¹⁴⁰ John Douglas, "Duck the arena issues, polls tell political parties," Winnipeg Free Press, April 3, 1995, p. A1.

¹⁴¹ Liberal Party of Manitoba, Listening to Manitobans: A Report from the Liberal Caucus, unpublished Liberal party brochure.

coverage by a legislative intern provides a basis for evaluating each of the three parties' political strategies. It also illustrated the growing influence that third party advertisers have in contemporary election campaigns. These political action committees, which first made their appearance in the United States in the 1970s, are now an important force in Manitoba's provincial elections.

MEDIA STORIES COVERING PARTY ANNOUNCEMENTS¹⁴²

ISSUE	NDP	LIB	PC	TOTAL	PERCENT
Health	30	3	6	39	43.8 %
Jobs/Economy	0	11	9	20	22.4 %
Education	3	4	8	15	16.8%
Justice	1	4	11	15	16.8 %

In a broad sweep the Progressive Conservatives focused evenly on all four issues. Their announcements reflected a strategy of an incumbent party attempting to protect itself and prevent or contain potential damage. It was a flexible and measured campaign without a particular focus and appeared to have been well suited for a party running on its record. By contrast, the opposition NDP focused heavily on healthcare. Fully 58.8 per cent of stories about the NDP appearing on Manitoba's major evening news programs were health-care oriented.¹⁴³ It was a strategy integrated into the whole campaign. At the lowest level it meant the volunteer could fasten a "Health-care" sticker on an NDP lawn sign. At campaign headquarters it meant dominating the media with well directed media announcements designed to awaken public concern about cuts to healthcare.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Chris Saxburg, "Unpublished Cumulative Media Statistics," May, 1995. This chart was taken from the raw data provided by a content analysis of televised news stories done between March 21 - April 21, 1995, The last three days of election coverage are not included.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p 16.

¹⁴⁴ CBC evening news, "ACCESS" documentary aired March 26, 1995.

The advertising campaigns of three of Manitoba's largest public sector unions complemented the NDP strategy . The Manitoba Teachers Association, Manitoba Nurses Union and the Manitoba Government Employees Union each ran ad campaigns focusing on government cut-backs in education and health-care. The Manitoba Nurses Union reportedly spent \$167,000 to attack the Filmon government's record, including a thirty-minute documentary intended to arouse voter concern that Medicare was in jeopardy.¹⁴⁵

The Progressive Conservatives also had some third party endorsements but not to the same extent as the NDP. The Manitoba Taxpayers Association ran a controversial commercial using a baby sinking in a tub full of loonies as a plea for balanced-budget legislation. Ads like these were judged too harsh by some Liberal observers, and lacked the impact of pro-health care campaigns. The Progressive Conservatives also spent heavily on TV commercials attempting to raise the issue of justice in the latter part of the campaign. They produced ads with Filmon promising to get tougher on criminals, as well as ads emphasizing his strong family values. The Liberal campaign by contrast ignored Edwards' image as a young family man. One commercial had been prepared highlighting this aspect of Edwards' personality but, for most observers, this was the worst of a bad lot and it was pulled from stations very quickly. There was an attempt to focus on the causes of crime but this message got lost in a poorly organized campaign.

The Liberal party did not have the benefit of close association with "deep pocket" third party advertisers. Neither was there any attempt to co-opt the advertising campaigns of special interest groups. The budget for the Liberal advertising campaign was set at \$276,000 and most of this was spent on what

¹⁴⁵ Paul Samyn, "Speak Loud, sell shtick" Winnipeg Free Press, April 8, 1995, p. A17.

many members considered to be poor quality television commercials.¹⁴⁶ By comparison, the NDP budgeted \$280,000 for their advertising campaign but because the Manitoba Election Finances Act only requires parties to include expenses by organizations "acting on their behalf with their knowledge and consent," they did not include the \$500,000 spent by third party advertisers who also campaigned on health-care.¹⁴⁷ The NDP campaign was successful because they co-opted special interest groups.

Rather than be content to let the NDP win the ad war, the Liberal campaign seemed intent to go out of its way to antagonize these special interest groups. Questionnaires mailed to the caucus went unanswered. The Manitoba Government Employees Union and the Manitoba Tax Payers Association both published newsletters that highlighted "No response" as the Liberal answer to all their questions.¹⁴⁸ "No response" also seemed to summed up the effectiveness of the party's media strategy.

The Liberal media campaign's main objective was to raise the media profile of Paul Edwards. Pre-election commercials, featuring Edwards, had even been aired in an attempt to introduce him to Manitobans. Compared to Gary Doer or Gary Filmon, however, each of whom had fought as leader in previous elections, coming into the 1995 election Edwards was an unknown quantity. These commercials were touted as a coup by the chief of staff but they appeared to have little impact. This strategy also conflicted with the concept of the "Liberal Team" that was popular within the party and felt to be the

¹⁴⁶ See Appendix A, "Post Election Questionnaire," Question 15.

¹⁴⁷ Government of Manitoba, Election Finances Act, E32, Section 50 - 53, 1993.

¹⁴⁸ Manitoba Governments Employees Union, Union Contact: Election Special, Spring 1995.

party's strength: "The best team message was never put forward. All we saw was the leader - no team."¹⁴⁹ It was nonetheless a sound strategy: the growing influence of television over the electorate has meant campaigns have placed a greater emphasis on the image of the leader.¹⁵⁰ The concept of a "Liberal Team" may be popular among the membership but practically it is difficult to translate into media coverage.

The second objective was to highlight Liberal commitment to creating jobs and strengthening Manitoba's economy. This message was the focal point of the Liberal Plan for Manitoba and a whole series of Liberal programs had been developed. A poorly organized leader's tour however never effectively presented these programs to the media. In terms of media strategy, neither the primary nor secondary objectives of the campaign were met. Only 23 percent of the stories generated in the press focused on jobs and the economy and the Liberal party shared this exposure with the Filmon government.¹⁵¹ The Liberal campaign spent more time reacting to negative media coverage. Instead of learning that Edwards stood for jobs and a stronger economy he only seemed weak and ineffective, against gambling, horse racing and the Jets.

Given that, prior to the campaign, 53.2 per cent of Manitobans indicated jobs and the economy were the most important issues facing Manitobans, and only 9.5 per cent felt health care to be more important, it should have been possible to create the same energy that surrounded the NDP's emphasis on

¹⁴⁹ See Appendix B, "Post-election Questionnaire," Survey response to question 15.

¹⁵⁰ Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹⁵¹ Saxburg, "Cumulated Media Statistics" *op. cit.*, p. 20.

health care.¹⁵² This never happened. The Liberal campaign could not compete against large interest groups who were actively trying to influence the electorate. The campaign had difficulty communicating with its own candidates let alone attempting to influence the media. The Liberal campaign lacked the skilled staff and the organization to find a larger audience for its policy message. It was a dismal failure for a party that had hired the caucus chief of staff because of her media experience.

The failure of the Liberal organizers to generate better coverage has been attributed to a media bias within the press. It was a constant cry at campaign headquarters. The CBC in particular was thought to harbor a negative bias towards the Liberal party. The charge of bias, though, is weak. The failure of the Liberal party to generate positive campaign coverage is more accurately attributed to sloppy management. The provincial campaign entered a self destruct mode in the first two weeks of the campaign. Calls from reporters were not answered quickly and the headquarters even had problems getting Paul Edwards' daily campaign schedule out on time. Divided among themselves, separated from the party, operating in little groups, the provincial campaign organization fought the battle alone and lost.

5.3 CAMPAIGN CENTRAL

Preparations for the 1995 Liberal campaign centered on the Election Readiness Committee (ERC). Formed by Paul Edwards in the early months of 1994, this committee had overall authority for the development of the Liberal campaign. This was a late start by comparison to the NDP and Progressive Conservatives who had already planned important elements of their campaigns well in advance of this date.

¹⁵² Liberal Party in Manitoba, "Listening to Manitobans," Unpublished report prepared for the Liberal Caucus.

Even with this late start ERC had notable success in the areas of candidate recruitment and fund-raising. In these two areas, due in part to the competence of the individuals in charge of finding candidates and raising money for the campaign, the party had tremendous success. The quality of Liberal candidates, especially those from rural areas, was exceptional.¹⁵³ A strong fund raising team had also ensured the campaign had enough money.

Such successes however were rare. Even though this committee was composed of party members, all with extensive campaign experience, it seldom met on a regular basis and input from the full committee was at times ignored or under utilized.¹⁵⁴ Critical decisions more often focused on key staff members. This was because Gunson, the chairman, lacking a base of his own supporters within the party, seemed to prefer relying on the advice of the chief of staff, campaign director and some key members of a steering group rather than forge a consensus on the larger committee. Gunson in the end would be poorly served by this staff. In the aftermath of the campaign many would blame him for all the campaign problems.

Gunson had previously chaired Edwards' 1993 leadership bid but did not have extensive campaign experience. This inexperience would take its toll, particularly because other key personnel, such as the campaign director, and caucus chief of staff, also lacked experience. None had worked on the 1990 campaign or managed a constituency campaign. One result of this inexperience was that manpower requirements before and during the election were seriously underestimated.

¹⁵³ Interview, Paul Edwards, Leader of the Liberal Party in Manitoba, June 1, 1995.

¹⁵⁴ Brenda St. Clair, Interview, ERC Committee member, June 26, 1995,

Election preparations, for instance, focused heavily on the campaign director, whereas, this was a task that should have been undertaken by two or three individuals, not one. This had serious ramifications. Responsible for the selection of a campaign headquarters, a phone system and the production of campaign literature, the campaign director's decisions would seriously affect the course of the campaign. Without a sound organizational infrastructure it was difficult to effectively implement any media or campaign strategy. The lack of personnel allowed key campaign suppliers, with close relationships to the campaign director and the chief of staff, to play a larger role in campaign strategy than might normally be expected. They would often sit in on key meetings, providing technical advice. In essence such a close working relationship made it difficult to objectively evaluate their performance.

Partly, the shortage of campaign staff became a problem because extra help from Ontario never arrived.¹⁵⁵ Sixteen campaign workers from Ontario Liberal party had been expected but, due to the lateness of Manitoba's election and the pending Ontario election, this help never materialized. Only two campaign workers from the federal party were eventually added to the central campaign team. They brought with them badly needed experience but also added to divisions within the campaign. A few other federal workers made their appearance at the constituency level but they never materialized in enough numbers to make any difference.

The shortage of staff was also complicated by a lack of central direction that Gunson should have provided. The leader's tour, policy section, media communications and volunteer staff answering questions from the public, each operated as an independent unit, failing to communicate or help each other. Gunson

¹⁵⁵ Interview, Tim Ryan, Past President Liberal Party in Manitoba, August 15, 1995.

made attempts to bring this group together but it had little effect. This contributed to the lack of support provided to constituency campaigns and the poor performance of the campaign in general.¹⁵⁶

Key personnel at campaign headquarters were shifted from one job to another and never utilized to their full potential. Paul Edwards' executive assistant, Bill McDonald, for example, ended up driving the leader's van and Dave Hickey, a legislative researcher who had developed close relations with the media was never used as a spokesperson, even though the press desperately wanted answers. Greg Doroschuk, federal staff on leave from Axworthy's ministerial office, was just moved from job to job. Others like Judy Edmonds, a legislative researcher, were just overworked. Support for rural candidates was also decimated when Mary-ellen Evans, a caucus employee with strong rural connections, left to become a campaign manager because she was dissatisfied with the campaign's direction. Her replacement did not have the knowledge to effectively respond to rural candidates. The executive director and office manager of Campbell House, the party's only full time employees, on the other hand, were just ignored. Their skills and detailed knowledge of party operations under utilized.

Gunson's appointment as chair of Election Readiness, in view of his lack of experience, can be considered a curious choice but not an unusual one. Using the same executive who ran the leadership race is common enough and a potentially sound organizational strategy.¹⁵⁷ Trudeau, Turner, and Chretien all used some of the same staff in their leadership races as in election campaigns. Political leaders fill positions like these with persons they trust and Gunson's close friendship with Edwards seemingly made him, in that

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix B, "Post-election Questionnaire," Question 15.

¹⁵⁷ Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

regard, ideal for the job. As a corporate lawyer for Investor's Syndicate, Gunson had the professional prerequisites.

There is no course, however, that can teach one how to run a provincial election campaign and Gunson's limited experience on Edwards' leadership campaign had not prepared him for the tension and strife of a provincial election. He was outmaneuvered and hung out to dry by campaign staffers that demonstrated little loyalty or common sense. When things started to go wrong, rather than evaluate their own actions or admit their own mistakes, they criticised the campaign chair. Gunson's departure during the middle of the campaign to attend a court case in Ontario only seemed to add credence to the stories that the campaign was going badly.¹⁵⁸

For a week Ernie Gilroy, Sharon Carstairs' 1988 campaign chair, and Paul Edwards' 1995 campaign manager, would take his place. Even Carstairs arrived to help out a struggling campaign but her appearance, to some, also raised old questions about the Axworthy-Carstairs rift. Gilroy attempted to correct some of the problems evident during the first two weeks of the campaign, but it was too little too late. He could not reverse the earlier organizational decisions that led to an inadequate campaign headquarters and a shortage of staff. Nor could he change a poor phone system which created a communications bottleneck. His presence on the provincial campaign also meant that he could not devote his full attention to Edwards' constituency campaign. Even when Gunson returned, communications and mistrust were so bad Gilroy still had to deal with some problems because candidates and campaign

¹⁵⁸ Paul Samyn & Bruce Owen, "Trail Boss Leaves in Middle of Campaign" Winnipeg Free Press, April 4, 1995.

managers were still not getting answers from campaign headquarters. These distractions may have contributed to Edwards' defeat in his own constituency.

Gunson's friendship and loyalty though may have been drawbacks. Because he was so close to Paul Edwards he was perhaps unable to provide the independent second voice needed by every political leader. Neither could Edwards fire Gunson without placing their friendship and the whole campaign in question. Gunson also followed Edwards rather than advising him on what to do and how to do it. It has been said political campaigns are too important to leave to politicians.¹⁵⁹ In the wear and tear of an election a party leader cannot campaign with a local candidate in the morning, release a policy announcement to the press at noon, tour a factory or business at two o'clock, make a speech at a high school at three, campaign in his own riding that evening, then rationally discuss election strategy for the next day. That duty is the responsibility of his staff who should have had the campaign planned out to the last detail.

In the case of Paul Edwards a strong central campaign chair was essential; leadership is a learned skill and, while Edwards was a survivor of two provincial elections, this was his first campaign as leader of the party. Edwards also had to contend with a difficult transition within the party as he tried to replace Carstairs as leader. Neither did he have the strong staff that had surrounded Carstairs. Thus, rather than concentrating on filling the role of leader, he became bogged down with decisions that should have been left to his staff. During the campaign it was not unusual for Edwards to discuss important policy decisions over breakfast with his key advisors.

¹⁵⁹ Baus Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

After the defeat, Gunson accepted the blame for what went wrong at a party postmortem. In this respect, he acted like many professional campaign managers before him, always dedicated, it has been observed, to his candidate and staff, regardless of personal considerations about his or her reputation:

He takes many a low blow, for when anything goes wrong he - not the candidate nor his workers - gets the blame. He accepts it because of his dedication to victory, for he knows there is no prize for second place.¹⁶⁰

But, in practice, to blame Gunson or any one individual would be simplistic and unfair. Politics and especially elections are at best mercurial and uncertain. Like war, most decisions were made with the best intentions and intelligence available at the time. Gunson had the misfortune of being in the wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong people. He dealt with the difficult campaign as gracefully as possible.

In the final analysis it is the individual voter who makes his own choice, sometimes for the most singular and unpredictable of reasons. But there were critical flaws in the Liberal campaign, some of which can be blamed on poor organization, others which extend from the party's structure and weak constituency associations. In this respect the Liberal defeat can be attributed to a number of factors, but the lack of a strong centralized campaign must be considered a primary cause. One volunteer best summed up the problem:

The central issue of the 1995 provincial election was leadership - by which I mean collective leadership, not just the party leader. A combination of factors - including an unfocused strategy, irrelevant policy pronouncements, poor communication, weak organization - came together to convince most Manitoba voters that the Liberals were incapable of governing or providing effective

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 258.

opposition, hence our third place showing.¹⁶¹

Without strong central direction the campaign quickly lost its momentum, direction and focus, and finally the support of most Manitobans.

¹⁶¹ See Appendix B "Post-Election Questionnaire," Survey response to Question 17,

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 FEDERAL INFLUENCES

In any evaluation of the 1995 Liberal campaign, the influence of the federal Liberal party cannot be dismissed. Both wings of the party share the same administration and overall participatory structure, and members move freely between federal-provincial arenas. Sharing the same party also means that inevitably conflicts will arise, if for no other reason than the provincial party must represent Manitobans first. Logically this means the provincial party must, at times, challenge federal policies when they conflict with provincial interests. But in Manitoba the provincial party is largely submerged inside the federal party.

AGMs and Provincial Councils are largely facades behind which party elites operate. Political leadership is also drained from the party as promising MLAs look to the larger federal arena to fulfill their goals. Without a track record of success, party members feel stronger about federal elections than they do provincial ones.¹⁶² Jobs, power and money flow from federal connections. Provincial activity in the absence of power goes largely unrewarded.

In 1995 the steering group, by choice, sought to emphasize a close relationship with a popular federal party.¹⁶³ This type of policy choice was never an issue under Carstairs' leadership. Because of her rocky relationship with Lloyd Axworthy, she naturally distanced herself from the federal party. Her choice for the 1988 campaign chair, Ernie Gilroy, was partly driven by a desire to escape the influence of the

¹⁶² See Appendix A, "Pre-Election Questionnaire," Question 11.

¹⁶³ Interview, Tim Ryan, Past President, Liberal Party in Manitoba, August

Axworthy organization.¹⁶⁴ By contrast one of Paul Edwards' major attractions as leader was his ability to bring these factions together. In 1995, however, the provincial party faced a problem it never encountered in the 1986, 1988 or the 1990 elections; there was a Liberal government in power in Ottawa.

This fact was complicated by a steering group largely composed of the party's urban, federally orientated, elite. It should hardly be surprising, that in this context, they chose to emphasize a close association with the federal party. This strategy decision had considerable impact on the campaign. Primarily it meant campaign headquarters placed a heavier emphasis on visits by high profile federal MPs, such as Brian Tobin, Sheila Copps and Lloyd Axworthy, with less attention given to local constituency campaigns. These staged events were likely ineffective because, given the need to maintain a working relationship with Manitoba's next provincial government, they were also limited as to the degree of political support they could give. Ironically, less popular Liberal MPs were largely ignored during the campaign and seemed to want to avoid attention.

The strategic decision to remain close to the federal party was twisted by the addition of Brian Bohunicky and Jeff Angel, two federal workers, whose own inclinations intensified an already heavy federal tilt. They were largely out of touch or unaware of provincial events. This was evident in a decision to pull Edwards out of campaigning in Inkster in favor of a 30 minute press conference with Lloyd Axworthy. This tactic was successful. The leaders tour got the media coverage it wanted but switching venues had the potential to alienate an important ethnic community. The local candidate had already made plans to have Edwards meet with community leaders but these had to be hastily canceled. The

¹⁶⁴ Carstairs, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

leader's tour also neglected to notify the other constituency in which the new announcement was being made. Thus, while the leader's tour got the media coverage it wanted, it contributed nothing to two local campaigns. Neither is it hard to imagine that these two federal workers, one of which was a special assistant to Lloyd Axworthy, had any great moral pains when it came to switching venues. But Bohunicky and Angel were only the pursers on the Titanic, not its captain or first mate. They cannot be blamed for the conditions that allowed them to dominate the leader's tour.

6.2 THE LEADER'S TOUR

Without a policy agenda outline available early in the preparations for the campaign, planning the staged events that are essential for a good leader's tour was impossible. Since campaigns have become more leader orientated, and the focus of the majority of media attention was on this tour, its failure was a critical element in the Liberal defeat. Campaign organizers on the other hand did not seem to recognize this. The chair of the leader's tour, Brenda St. Clair, was not even a member of the smaller, more powerful, steering committee. When she tried to get information from Gunson or the chief of staff she felt they more often ignored her and her efforts. Yet the campaign invested hundreds of thousands of dollars on commercials that emphasized the leadership of Paul Edwards. St. Clair however had formed a leader's tour campaign sub committee and had developed a limited plan. It was not extensive and had flaws, but it was a plan. In the first days of the campaign however this plan would be scrapped and St. Clair, not wanting to create even more conflict, would resign in the second week of the campaign.

The lack of well planned and staged events hurt the campaign. Rather than complement the message of leadership Edwards appeared hesitant, lacking the leadership skills he really had. In one

case the new leader's tour rushed to a Jamaican Bakery to announce a Liberal small business program. Edwards even posed for the camera helping to prepare Jamaican food in the restaurant. But the new leaders tour staff had not done their homework. When Edwards left the restaurant, the owner announced to a CBC reporter that he did not think much of the Liberal plan.¹⁶⁵

The Morgantaler clinic gaffe also spooked the whole campaign staff right from the start. After that incident the organizers were unwilling to admit to any mistakes for fear of being seen as unprofessional. This meant that the campaign created lies to cover up shortfalls. The chief of staff explained to the media that the campaign did not include locations on the daily leader's itinerary because of a fear on behalf of the campaign director that Progressive Conservatives or New Democrats would create problems.¹⁶⁶ Most days, however, the leader's tour didn't really know where Edwards was going next, and statements like these to the media did nothing to convince the press that they could trust the Liberal party or Edwards.

When the leader's tour chairperson, St. Clair, resigned in the second week of the campaign her departure created a gap in the campaign organization that allowed Bohunicky and Angel to step in. St. Clair and her sub committee's limited plan had generally been ignored up to this point, but at least her presence meant someone with a local background was on the tour. When she left, Jeff Angel, a federal staffer from Calgary, soon led the tour, but Angel did not have the local knowledge needed to make the tour effective.

¹⁶⁵ Saxberg, *op cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁶ Liberal Party in Manitoba, "Report on Election 1995 - Communications," Unpublished Letter from Pat Onysko (Chief of Staff) to Allister Gunson, p. 1.

This was demonstrated in the "New Foundations" announcement that was intended to highlight the party's commitment to job creation. St. Clair had lined up a suitable location for the "New Foundations" announcement. The original plan included the home of her housekeeper who lived in an older home that needed renovations. It could have been a perfect staged event. After St. Clair's departure, Angel was left without a location for this announcement, and he had never bothered to consult her. Angel would search for a new location but in the end settled for making the announcement at Campbell House. This location did nothing to add to the announcement or make it more newsworthy. Like most other Liberal announcements any potential it had was lost because of a lack of planning and communication.

6.3 TARGETED RIDINGS

The decision by the party to target constituencies was a major step forward in 1995, an important strategic effort at securing Liberal representation in Manitoba's legislature. The 1990 campaign failed to utilize this tactic and wasted resources campaigning in areas with little hope of success. This type of strategy, in a parliamentary system that awards seats based on geographic, rather than popular representation, is counter productive. Under this system, although the Liberals secured 28 per cent of the vote in 1990 and 24 per cent in 1995, the party remained largely under-represented in the legislature. Nevertheless, this type of electoral system is unlikely to change. The party must decide how to maximize its campaign resources.

Campaign organizers utilized this strategy but with "targeting" had limited success. The central campaign was unable to shift manpower resources from one constituency to another. It had never done the groundwork necessary to identify volunteers willing to contribute their time and energy to more than

one campaign. As a consequence, repeating a trend in 1990, popular candidates monopolized those experienced volunteers who were available.¹⁶⁷ Organizers had more success when they directed paid campaign organizers, but most of these personnel never materialized due to the late Ontario election. The paid organizers that did appear at the constituency level were sometimes mistrusted by the local campaign teams. Nor could these organizers perform the miracle expected of them in 35 days when constituency presidents had two years to prepare for the election. In the post-election questionnaire one campaign manager suggested that with the money paid to these organizers he would rather have given honorariums to his local volunteers.

Targeted constituencies also had access to polling data, though such information was of limited value to most campaign managers: they were more concerned with practical aspects of running their campaign rather than strategic matters. The theory behind targeted constituencies however added to dissension within the campaign.

There was a perception of favoritism among some candidates because information on which was a targeted constituency and which was not, was being leaked out. This issue, along with others, only added to the mistrust surrounding the campaign and was never fully addressed by the leader or the campaign chair. Because a not-so-secret targeted list was talked about by key staff members, rumor was more common than fact. It was believed for instance that there was an "A team and a B team."¹⁶⁸ Such categories did not exist but the campaign, in an attempt to target constituencies, did assess constituencies

¹⁶⁷ Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ See Appendix B, "Post-election Questionnaire," Survey response to question 17.

with the potential for a Liberal win. This was based on a number of factors, including; past electoral performance, constituency organization, as well as the nominated candidate's political strength.¹⁶⁹ In total there were 15 such targeted constituencies. Given the poorly organized nature of the campaign however none of these constituencies would likely claim they received any better treatment than the other constituencies.

In any case targeting is a necessity. One of the hard realities of the provincial Liberal party is that while it can claim electoral support across the province, this does not give the party strong electoral support in any one area. In the face of a devastating poll that showed the Liberals trailing badly in the last two weeks of the campaign, the campaign reacted by shifting to an urban focus. Organizers had remembered the 1990 campaign's tactical mistake of concentrating on rural non-Liberal incumbent seats.¹⁷⁰ This decision was likely correct but could not save the campaign.

6.5 CAMPAIGN COMMERCIALS AND THE RED BOOK

Paul Edwards was young, capable and energetic and it was felt before, and demonstrated during the campaign, that he could be made into a valuable political asset.¹⁷¹ A strong focused media campaign should have been able to intensify his leadership potential and his appeal to the average voter. Leadership is also a natural message for the medium of television.¹⁷² Carstairs' campaigns in 1986, 1988 and 1990

¹⁶⁹ Tim Ryan, "Reflections on the Spring of our Discontent: Manitoba and Ontario Provincial Campaigns" Unpublished Letter to Paul Edwards.

¹⁷⁰ Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 11

¹⁷¹ Editorial, "The Edge to Edwards," Winnipeg Free Press, April 13, 1995, p. A6.

¹⁷² Lee, *op. cit.*, pp. 32 - 33.

all used the image of the "Lady in Red" to their advantage. Packaging Edwards in the same manner should not have been a difficult or complicated message to impart. His lack of media profile could have even been an asset.

The ad campaign that attempted to highlight Paul Edwards was poorly prepared and the television commercials were generally felt to be of below average or poor quality.¹⁷³ They were even a joke to members of Gary Doer's campaign team.¹⁷⁴ In attempting to utilize television the Liberal campaign team had forgotten that it could also lose votes:

You lose them when you put your guy in front of the camera, the kind, you know, where he starts out, "Good evening, ladies and gentleman, my name is Joe Blow and I want to talk to you about taxes." When you do that you can hear the click of sets being switched or turned off all over the state. That sort of program is just radio with the lights turned on to read by.¹⁷⁵

The campaign commercials never captured Paul Edwards' energy or sense of commitment. One of the original ads featured Edwards standing in front of the camera but not directly looking directly at it, like Joe Blow coming to talk to the viewer about taxes.

Part of the problem with these commercials was that the advertising agency, McKim Communications, hired to produce the original ads, was fired in the months leading up to the election. The chief of staff convinced Paul Edwards and Allister Gunson they could not do the job and that it could

¹⁷³ See Appendix B "Post-election Questionnaire," Survey response to Question 15.

¹⁷⁴ CBC evening news, "ACCESS" documentary aired March 26, 1995.

¹⁷⁵ Baus & Ross, op. cit., p. 331.

be done cheaper. But good TV production is not cheap and in an election campaign it is essential.¹⁷⁶ The enormity of this failure is only evident when you consider that close to \$267,000 was spent to raise Edwards' media profile and he lost his own seat.

There were conflicts over what direction the campaign should take, but firing McKim Communications, who had worked on past provincial and federal campaigns, did leave the campaign organizers open to accusations of nepotism. Without Mckim, responsibility for production of the commercials was given to Allen Lawrence, husband of Pat Onsyko, and Mid Canada Video. This was typical of how some contracts were awarded by Election Readiness. The executive director recognized this flaw and resorted to writing disclaimers on purchase orders he had not authorized. Not surprisingly, traditional Liberal suppliers with a track record, lost out to friends of ERC staff who, more often than not, could not do the job.

The provincial "Red Book" was one aspect of the campaign that fell victim to this process. Instead of relying on a larger printing company, the contract was awarded to Chess Communications who were not instructed to, or did not have the ability, to produce the book in significant numbers when needed. But the campaign director, a friend of Chess Communications owner, would after the election, become an employee of Chess Communications. A strategic decision had been made to release the Liberal policy book on March 31, making the Liberals the last party to release its policy. This was a sound enough decision and had the party been able to follow through with the distribution of "Red Book" the impact of this decision would have likely increased. Unfortunately the campaign did not receive its total shipment

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p 331.

of books until April 7. This was a Friday, a full eight days after the original policy announcement, and shipments to rural candidates, which had to be placed on the bus, would not be received until the 10th or 11th.

By comparison, when the NDP campaign released its policy book, copies were widely available that day. When phoned for a copy of their platform it was delivered in the mail two days later. The Progressive Conservatives insisted on answering policy questions by following up with a telephone call. By comparison Liberal attempts at influencing the public or the media were a catastrophe. Liberals had only assigned one legislative intern who volunteered his services answering more complicated policy questions.

6.3 COMPUTERS AND THE CAMPAIGN

The 1995 Liberal campaign did not take advantage of new computer technology now available to campaigns, primarily because it failed to understand the unique demands it placed on organization. Efforts in this area were second thoughts, never fully integrated into the overall campaign strategy. The Liberal campaign also had its share of just plain bad luck. The Paul Vincent affair was an example of this which seriously hampered the party's ability to track Liberal support during the campaign.

Hired by the party, Paul Vincent was to develop a campaign database program. This program was to have become the property of the Party and was intended to be used by all campaigns. Its development giving constituencies the ability to more efficiently identify Liberal voters. These lists in turn could be compiled into a province wide registry and used as a basis for deep base line polling. ERC had identified

one important use for computer technology and attempted to bring it to the constituency level. Vincent however would disappear in the short months leading up to the writ, leaving a trail of unpaid computer consultants.

With Vincent's disappearance the best intentions of the ERC to provide constituencies with a powerful database tool, instead became one of the campaign's greatest failures. With Vincent's disappearance the campaign faced a difficult choice of abandoning the project, choosing off the shelf computer programs like Campaign on Disk or starting over from scratch. Unfortunately the campaign made the decision to start over from scratch and a new program was developed by Stan Walker, a programmer who had worked for Angus Reid.

Walker would produce the simple "Marked List" program: a program shell running Fox Pro. This was a major achievement given the time and effort needed to develop computer software, but it was less than ideal. One of the greatest difficulties Walker faced in developing this program was the lack of a province wide database. Elections Manitoba voters list is not provided in a digital format and a 1993 federal database was used and split into provincial constituencies. As usual however more attention had been paid to urban constituencies databases and rural databases were largely useless.

As a result of its hasty preparation however the "Marked List" program contained numerous bugs which were never totally solved. In one version, hitting the left arrow key caused the computer to freeze up and in others, hours of work were lost when the program deleted or failed to save data for no apparent reason. Partly, this can be attributed to untrained campaign volunteers using computers for the first time

but the "buggy" program was the center of much wasted effort. Seventy-one per cent of respondents indicated that it was of little use in identifying and getting out the Liberal vote on election day.¹⁷⁷ One volunteer best summed up the impact of the Marked List program on constituency campaigns:

In the end we used a combination of manual computation and Microsoft Excel for Windows. We initially tried the Marked List program but it was USELESS AND A WASTE OF TIME. The developer should have consulted experienced campaign workers on a suitable program, (searching for names/date was difficult, data entry cumbersome, no documentation given)...

Lack of user support was likely one of the greatest frustrations with this program. Not really understanding the demands of this technology themselves, campaign organizers simply mailed out copies of the disks. No one had considered the type or speed of the machines being used. No efforts at standardizing computer platforms or file formats had been made. The majority of users had 386 platforms and became frustrated when a program developed on a Pentium didn't work. They called campaign headquarters but no one had been hired to provide this type of computer support. Walker tried to solve many of the problems but he had been hired to write the program, not provide computer support to 57 constituencies for 35 days. It should be noted that in the Ontario election where a program similar to "Marked List" was used, a central computer support team set up the program and provided technical support.¹⁷⁸

Some constituencies abandoned the Marked List program as soon as problems became evident. Others used Campaign on Disk a program that had been developed by Michelle McDonald, a former staffer at the provincial legislature and now an aid to Senator Carstairs. This program proved to be a very

¹⁷⁷ See Appendix B, "Post-election Questionnaire," Survey response to Question 13.

¹⁷⁸ Ryan, *op. cit.*,

reliable alternative and its users were impressed by poll by poll counts that were highly accurate when compared to the official poll count.¹⁷⁹ In general however technology like this had a very limited impact on the 1995 Liberal campaign and most managers ran very traditional campaigns. They would rather have more volunteers than computers.

The reasons campaign organizers did not chose Campaign on Disk once the extent of Paul Vincent's misdeeds became known are unclear. The fact that there were two competing programs does indicate that there was little thought given to how computers would be integrated into the campaign as a whole. It was bad luck that original plans for using computers during the campaign were never developed. It was evident however that campaign organizers had difficulties with other more basic technology, in particular the phone.

6.4 ELECTION HEADQUARTERS & THE PHONES

In a departure from the traditional practice of running provincial campaigns out of Campbell House the decision was made to utilize rented office space. This was because Campbell House, while an excellent location for party headquarters, lacked the necessary room. This seemingly innocuous decision would have a devastating impact on the course of the campaign.

Located at 666 St. James Avenue, the new offices quickly proved no better than the facilities available at Campbell House. By the second week of the campaign, they even proved too small to adequately house the entire staff and extra office space had to be rented for the policy research personnel.

¹⁷⁹ Interview, Gary Kowalski, MLA The Maples, June 16, 1995.

Layout of office space was also inadequate. It was divided between a first floor reception area and numerous second floor offices that were further divided along a public hallway. There was no center of activity or common meeting ground for the staff where they could exchange ideas or just keep informed about campaign activities. Without this exchange of ideas staff members operated in isolation from each other and this isolation contributed to the sense of one way communication that seemed to surround the campaign. Even the address, associated with the mark of the beast in the book of Revelations, became a joke in the media and with the public, who thought it was a jinx.¹⁸⁰

The second floor staff, because they could not be seen by the switchboard operator located on the first floor, appeared to isolate themselves in their separate offices, even refusing to answer the phones that constantly rang. Information also appeared to stop on the second floor. In the first ten days of the campaign, the leader's tour agenda, even when campaign headquarters had one, seldom found its way downstairs on a regular basis. This appeared to even further isolate the first floor staff who tried to respond to the hundreds of calls received from the public each day.

This task was crucial, because early in the planning stages of the campaign, ERC made the decision to include a 1-800 number on every piece of campaign literature. This number, accessible across the province, was intended to provide the voters with a direct line to a Liberal volunteer who could answer their questions. Interestingly, many constituency campaigns simply blocked out this 1-800 number. They felt that questions from their constituents should be answered by local campaign staff.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ "Liberal move no devil's pact", Winnipeg Free Press, March 23, 1995. p. B3.

¹⁸¹ Interview, Philippe Le Quere, St. Vital Campaign Manager, October 22, 1995.

All calls to campaign headquarters came through a switchboard and then to an extension. Candidates, campaign managers, members of the steering committee, the general public, the media and even the leader of the party called on the same lines and were essentially treated in the same manner. Extraordinary measures were taken to ensure important ones were dealt with promptly but the system created unnecessary delays. Cellular phones were intended to solve some of these problems but they proved unsatisfactory. Under heavy use batteries had to be constantly recharged.

Voice mail was also part of this system and it turned into a technological nightmare. Once it was in place few members of the campaign team on the second floor, it seemed, felt inclined to answer the phone. In most cases this was not intentional, but with the high stress associated with the campaign and a large number of tasks assigned to a small staff, messages left on voice mail often fell victim to more pressing concerns. But in practice this meant many important messages were not answered until days later.

Fax machines were another problem. The campaign had given no thought to how these machines would be used. Typical of the lack of preparation for the campaign, the campaign just rented three machines and expected that someone would know how to program them. Neither did they bother to designate any of the fax machines as incoming or outgoing faxes only. This is an important consideration since a single news release had to be faxed to about 50 news organizations across the province. If the machine was interrupted in this pre-set program by an incoming call it would start over again or stall, sometimes leading to an eight hour delay.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Pat Onysko, "Report on Election 1995 - Communications," Unpublished Liberal Party Document.

(continued...)

These communications bottlenecks had devastating effects, particularly when responding to the media who, working against a deadline, require quick turnaround on their questions. Cellular numbers were given out to the media representatives but many called back to complain these were not being answered. It provided them with incentive to conclude that the campaign was having difficulties. It never provided the professional image needed to convince the press, and thus the public, that Edwards and his team of Liberal candidates were capable of providing the leadership and government Manitobans deserved.

(...continued)

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1 CONCLUSION

On April 25, 1995, 35 days after Premier Filmon dropped the provincial writ calling the thirty-sixth provincial election the Liberal party faced the electorate. It had been a long hard campaign and the problems that beset the party quickly became evident as the members gathered at Le Rendezvous nightclub to listen to the early returns. The victory party turned into a wake. By 8:20 p.m. CBC TV predicted a majority Progressive Conservative government and Filmon accomplished what few political pundits, before the election, had thought possible. Winning 31 seats, he led his party back to a third term with a majority government. It was the first third term victory since 1966. The New Democrats were returned as the official opposition with 23 seats. Left with only three seats in the Legislature, the Liberal Party in Manitoba did not even qualify as an officially recognized party.

Liberal support, which had measured 35 per cent in polls at the beginning of the election, collapsed. It started to fall in the first week of the campaign and continued to fall for 35 days, spurred on by poor organization and sloppy management. As a consequence, the party suffered its worst electoral defeat since 1986: out of six incumbent Liberal MLAs only three would remain in the Legislative Assembly. The percentage of Liberal popular vote also fell from 28.07 per cent in 1990 to 23.06 per cent in 1995.¹⁸³ Even Paul Edwards, the party's new young leader, lost his seat. It was a devastating blow for a party that had hopes of forming the next provincial government.

¹⁸³ Government of Manitoba, Statement of Votes: report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Thirty-Sixth Provincial Election, April 25, 1995, pp. 20 - 21.

The Liberal collapse is due to a number of factors. The party's constituency associations are still weak, a problem noted after the 1990 provincial election. Never very strong, constituency associations have continued to stagnate, some becoming no more than the political fiefdoms of aging constituency presidents. After 1990, following an election that saw the party collapse from 20 to just six seats, no work was undertaken to repair damage in this area. Carstairs' original efforts at rebuilding the party were forgotten as she became more involved in debates surrounding national unity; rather than strengthening the party's constituency associations.

Following the 1990 election, divisions within the party, primarily between the Carstairs and Axworthy forces, undermined the provincial leader's ability to continue her original work. When Carstairs stepped down, the new leader, Paul Edwards, was chosen in large part because it was felt he could bridge that gap. His attention quickly focused on legislative duties and he was largely unaware of how critically weak constituency associations were.

The party also ignored important work in this area. Operating as a coffee club some members of the executive only have a limited idea of what the responsibilities of their position involve. Social activities appear to have more significance than the mundane duties of party administration. Under such a system, the underlying concept surrounding the organization of the Liberal party, participatory democracy, is often subverted. Annual general meetings and provincial councils are largely under attended by the general membership and the party's executive value the image of party unity over all else. But without input into decisions surrounding the party, the general membership has little reason to become more involved, and without this involvement organizers depend on the same supporters. In the end even this

group is reduced to a rather small exclusive clique.

The executive however cannot be held solely responsible for weak constituency associations. They did little to attract new members but even in the wake of the 1995 disaster new members still asked to join the party. Once a new member joins they become the responsibility of the constituency association. Generally these associations failed to reach out to their new members. Consequently during the 1995 provincial election many constituencies lacked volunteers to run an effective campaign. Other more important duties, such as fund-raising, were also neglected. These two factors may not influence the electorate's decision to vote Liberal but they do influence the ability of a constituency association to run an effective campaign. In 1990 the loss was partly blamed on weak constituency associations. In 1995 the same conclusions can be drawn, prior to the election, over 50 per cent of the constituency presidents agreed the party was weakest at the constituency level.¹⁸⁴

The party was also divided. A rural urban split that first contributed to the party's decline in the 1970s was still evident.¹⁸⁵ In both pre and post-election questionnaires, many rural Liberals felt they had little voice in the operations of the party. This feeling was translated into reality as both the party's executive and campaign organization lacked strong rural representation. This division was exacerbated during the campaign when gun control became an issue for many rural Manitobans. As party strategists had chosen to maintain a close relationship with the federal party, they had no option but to support federal legislation, against the wishes of some rural candidates. Federal gun control policy and the

¹⁸⁴ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," Question 8.

¹⁸⁵ Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

provincial party's commitment to it may have had considerable impact on the rural voter, giving them a reason not to vote Liberal.

Similarly, the abortion issue divided the party. At least one constituency executive sought to challenge the party's traditional pro-choice policy by nominating an anti-abortion candidate. When abortion became an issue, after the Morgantaler clinic gaffe, these cracks surfaced in the media. It left the impression that Edwards had done a flip-flop on the issue and again gave the electorate another reason not to vote Liberal. The Jets arena issue also impacted on the Liberal campaign. With the future of Winnipeg's professional hockey team at stake, it became, like gun control and abortion, a highly divisive issue.

Polling suggested that most Manitobans and party members themselves were against public money for a new arena.¹⁸⁶ But it became for some, not a monetary issue, but an emotional one, involving the future of the city and Manitoba. It was a topic that may not have been on the front pages of the daily newspapers but on the radio talk shows and the sports pages it was an issue that tugged at the voters' hearts. Liberal policy tried to please both sides and pleased none. Such was the emotion surrounding the Jets issue public opinion may have swung 180 degrees by the end of the campaign and public support for the Jets, mobilized after the campaign, proved to be very effective. In this context Liberal candidates were targeted for a concentrated assault by pro-arena groups that painted Liberals as anti-arena and anti-Jets. This issue more than any other may have destroyed Liberal hopes for victory.

¹⁸⁶ See Appendix A, "Pre-election Questionnaire," Question 17.

However, weak constituency associations and a divided party are only one part of the equation that led to the Liberal collapse. Party administration is hampered by an aging computer system. Problems with this system became evident during the 1993 leadership race and have continued to hamper attempts at efficient administration. The current membership renewal process is not cost effective and membership data is under utilized. Fund-raising lists, one key to generating revenue, are haphazardly managed and hours of work are duplicated every time volunteers organize a new fund-raiser.

Problems such as these had parallels in the provincial campaign and point to a general misunderstanding of this new technology. The campaign's attempts at developing a computer database to help constituency associations were well intentioned but failed miserably. Like most efforts by the party in this area there was no consideration as to how this technology would be integrated into the campaign as a whole. In 1995 all three provincial parties competed in cyberspace for the first time. But this technology is still in its infancy. It had little impact on most constituency campaigns. But in the long term, since the Progressive Conservatives and New Democrats have already demonstrated interest and skill in this area, if the party does not vigorously pursue its own efforts, it will enter the next election at a disadvantage.

The highly centralized nature of campaign organization allowed organizers to ignore or circumvent otherwise normal administrative constraints. But this type of campaign management structure is still needed to make the many quick decisions needed in a fast paced environment. The participatory structure of the party is unsuitable when compared to the demands of a modern campaign. Nonetheless such a structure cannot operate without the support of the party or without detailed knowledge of party

operations. One of the problems any central campaign organization must face is the need to balance these two conflicting demands: the need for consultation and decisive management. In 1995 this balance was not achieved and it created a provincial campaign that was unable to respond effectively to the demands of the media , constituency associations and the voter.

The campaign's and the party's greatest flaw may have been the lack of any clearly defined policy process. Candidates, MLAs and volunteers were generally kept in the dark about provincial Liberal policy. The policy process centered heavily on the legislative staff. Input from the party was ignored or discounted. Without a clearly defined policy message little practical planning on important aspects of the campaign, such as the leader's tour, could be done. Policy that was produced in the form of the Liberal Plan for Manitoba was acceptable but its late production and distribution hindered constituency campaigns. This was devastating because this lack of planning created opportunities for the media to exploit. Allowing the media and the voting public to conclude Edwards was not the choice for the next Premier of Manitoba.

A federal Liberal government was in power and federal policies like gun control impacted heavily on the provincial Liberals. Carstairs had naturally distanced herself from the federal party but part of the rationale for Edwards as leader was that he could bridge the gap between these two levels. The campaign committee was also heavily dominated by the party's federal elite and they made a decision to remain closely associated with the federal party. They even copied the federal party's 1993 strategy and produced a provincial version of the federal red book. The campaign committee, buoyed by the high popularity of the Prime Minister, seemed to conclude the 1993 election was a Liberal victory rather than a Conservative

collapse. By comparison the Progressive Conservatives recognized a flaw in this type of campaign strategy in 1990, focusing on Filmon's leadership rather than the Progressive Conservative Party during the Mulroney years. It was a theme they continued in 1995.

The inclusion of two federal campaign workers who were largely out of touch with provincial concerns intensified this relationship. In addition to defending gun control, a heavy emphasis was placed on visits by federal cabinet ministers throughout the campaign at the expense of local constituencies. Such visits probably did little to convince Manitobans to vote for a provincial Liberal leader.

The lack of a strong campaign chair also created difficulties for the provincial campaign. Allister Gunson did not have the force of personality needed to bind the campaign team together. He was too close to Edwards to make an effective campaign manager. Without extensive experience inside the party, he did not have his own network of advisors. As a consequence he relied on the advice of his staff who served him poorly. In this context a poorly organized and run campaign headquarters must be considered a major contributor to the Liberal defeat in 1995. Rather than work together campaign staff members worked at odds with each other. Lack of preparation and planning prior to the campaign created divisions between key personnel, party staff and volunteers. A campaign headquarters that physically isolated campaign staff only intensified these differences.

A poorly executed media campaign also contributed to the defeat. Rather than demonstrate that Edwards and the Liberal party stood for jobs and a strong economy, the message that came across to the voting public convinced them Liberals were against gambling, horse racing and hockey but didn't have

any strong views on abortion. The most common response to questionnaires received from interest groups before the election was “no response.” Efforts at raising Paul Edwards’ media profile prior to the campaign did not work. Policy announcements “on the fly” made the campaign look even more disorganized. Poor quality campaign commercials added to this confused message, as did the failure to have the Liberal Plan for Manitoba produced in significant numbers and delivered to constituencies in a timely manner. This hindered the constituencies’ ability to carry the plans message to the voting public. They were given every reason not to vote Liberal.

The campaign also had basic communication problems. These extended from a shortage of staff, and, in the end, an over worked staff, but in general decisions in these areas were poorly made. The phone system created a communications bottleneck. Calls from candidates and campaign managers about policy issues went unanswered leading to frustration and mistrust on both sides. All things considered the 1995 Liberal campaign faced too many obstacles, most self inflicted.

7.2 EPILOGUE

The party's poor showing following the 1995 election has again left provincial Liberals pondering their future in Manitoba. Paul Edwards faced this question and, citing family responsibilities on November 3, 1995, announced his resignation as leader, pending the selection of his replacement.

Edwards’ departure left the party with some serious questions. Not the least of these is who would succeed him as leader. But, reduced to just three seats, the party no longer has official status in the

Legislative Assembly. More damaging, though, than this loss of prestige was the physical reduction in operating funds. Without official status the Liberal Caucus cannot support the staff that allowed it to compete with the New Democrats and Progressive Conservatives in the Legislature. Although the party now has only three MLAs its message is no less important. Lack of staff will hurt in the next provincial election and no political strategy can compensate for this loss. Reduced to just a rump in the legislature the provincial party could be headed for oblivion.

Some members no doubt feel justified in blaming the party's loss and decline on Edwards' two years as leader. These voices, through intermediaries, appeared quickly after the election and called for his resignation. Edwards can by no means be absolved of his role in the election. He made some bad choices and these contributed to the defeat, but, he was elected as leader to make choices. Even in the face of the 1995 defeat Liberals will find it difficult to find a replacement with his talents. As scapegoats go, though, Edwards is as good as any if the party wants to bury its problems and refuse to deal with the real issues surrounding its defeat. These have less to do with leadership and more to do with organization and party structure.

The participatory model that is the basis for the constitutional organization of the Liberal party is largely illusory. AGMs and Provincial Councils have become facades behind which prominent Liberals operate, creating a system that leaves the political leadership dangerously out of touch. As a consequence the party has an aging membership and still suffers from a rural-urban rift. Until the provincial party solves these problems it cannot hope to form the next provincial government and call itself a provincial party.

Some would argue that the federal party may be the savior of its provincial cousin. Twelve federal MPs at least assure members that party's administration will remain operating in the short term. It should be noted, however, that these two systems share the same democratic structure and its associated problems. Strong riding associations that are built on constituent participation, at all levels of the party, stand a better chance of winning in the next election than those which ignore such activity. Federal success in 1993 was exceptional. It is not expected to do as well in the next election and it is largely self delusion if the federal organizers do not believe the same problems can affect their campaign. Even if a strong federal Progressive Conservative Party does not appear, the Reform party or the New Democrats will likely find rural Manitoba ridings receptive targets.

Returning the party to its grassroots may seem like a time worn cliché, but that is exactly what any future provincial leader must do. Nor can he or she count on being the next Premier of Manitoba. Without funds and a large full time staff, the provincial party can count itself lucky if it wins four seats in the next election and regains its official party status. The leader will have to concentrate on the job of building constituencies in much the same fashion that Carstairs originally attempted before being distracted by constitutional or party difficulties. This is not a short term job and to be considered successful the party must win a rural seat. This will require dedication and the knowledge that new leader will likely only prepare the way for the next leader.

Equally critical the leader must also attract and keep a more active youth membership. Without strong university political associations the party will never produce the top quality organizers it needs.

The new provincial leader will also have other important tasks. With the loss of caucus operating funds the party will have to make fund-raising a top priority . This money will have to be spent on a financing a full time staff to prepare and bring the party into the next election. There will also have to be a provincial policy convention. A sound policy process will give the provincial party the independent voice it needs. Without this voice it will never emerge from the shadow of the federal party. The new leader must also work towards improving the party's performance in the area of computer technology. This technology will continue to have a growing influence over the party's ability to mount an effective campaign.

A new leader must also form a campaign organization as soon as possible. This organization should be as inclusive as possible, since one of the major complaints surrounding the 1995 campaign was that too few people controlled too much power. A hierarchical campaign structure is still needed as this type of management structure offers the necessary control and co-ordination needed for victory. The campaign chair must be able to balance the two conflicting needs of democratic participation and executive action, in addition to providing the leader with strong advice. But it is not enough for just the provincial campaign team to be ready. Constituency presidents must be encouraged to work towards victory by concentrating on fund-raising and volunteer recruitment in the years between elections in addition to finding the best candidate to represent them in the next election.

It is at least premature to predict the death of the provincial Liberal party. In retrospect it is in better condition than it was nine years ago. In 1986 only 5.6 per cent of Manitobans voted Liberal; in 1995 that number stood at 23.6 per cent. The party in this respect appears to have carved out a niche for

itself but Carstairs' 1988 victory seems to have been aberration. It is not unwarranted based on this analysis to announce that the provincial party is in serious difficulty. Without a new leader, without a strong organization and a united party, any policy or platform, left or right, adopted in the next general provincial election will probably suffer grievous difficulties similar to those that beset the Liberal party in the 1995 campaign.

APPENDICES

Research notes

Appendix A "Pre-Election Questionnaire" was mailed to all 71 respondents who were identified as provincial constituency presidents and federal riding presidents in November of 1994. Out of a possible 71 respondents 29 returned their questionnaires for a response rate of approx 39 per cent.

Appendix B "Post Election Questionnaire" was mailed to 231 candidates, campaign chairs, general volunteers, office managers, official agents, and members of the party executive approximately three weeks after the 1995 election. 82 questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 35 %. For each category the response rate was as follows: candidates (33.3%), campaign chairs (32.0%), general volunteers (12.8%), office managers (3.0%), official agents (7.8%) and others (9.9%).

Appendix C: Respondents to the "Post Election Questionnaire" also had the opportunity to provide written comments. These were used in the body of the thesis un-altered. Because of the number of these comments Appendix C "Report to the Provincial Council " is provided as a short summary.

Interviews: Research for this thesis was conducted over a period of year and a half as a participant observer during which I worked as a volunteer at Campbell House and for the 1995 Liberal campaign answering phones at campaign headquarters. In the course of this volunteer work I had the opportunity to talk with and interview the public and members of the party almost everyday. It is these views which I have tried to bring forward. In the Bibliography I have included only those individuals with whom I arranged to have a formal interview.

Appendix A
Pre-Election Questionnaire

Questions:	RESPONSES					PERCENTAGE RESPONSE					
	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Not Sure	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Agree	Agree Somewhat	Not Sure	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree	Av. deviation
Question 1: Competing federal and provincial interests inside the Liberal Party in Manitoba rarely cause problems.	4	7	11	5	2	13.8	24.1	37.9	17.2	6.9	8.8
Question 2: As a member of the Liberal party I would say my interests are best represented by the right wing of the party.	0	4	5	11	9	0.0	13.8	17.2	37.9	31.0	11.6
Question 3: The Senate of Canada should be elected.	14	3	7	1	4	48.3	10.3	24.1	3.4	13.8	13.0
Question 4: Federal interests dominate the Liberal Party in Manitoba.	3	6	8	7	5	10.3	20.7	27.6	24.1	17.2	5.0
Question 5: The social aspect of being a member of a political party is more important than its politics.	1	2	5	8	13	3.4	6.9	17.2	27.6	44.8	13.0
Question 6: The Meech Lake Accord would have been good for Canada.	0	2	3	3	21	0.0	6.9	10.3	10.3	72.4	21.0
Question 7: Homosexual couples should have the right to the same benefits as heterosexual couples.	5	5	7	4	8	17.2	17.2	24.1	13.8	27.6	4.7
Question 8: The Liberal Party in Manitoba is weakest at the provincial constituency level	8	11	4	5	1	27.6	37.9	13.8	17.2	3.4	10.2
Question 9: After losing an election political parties should always hold a leadership review.	7	7	4	8	3	24.1	24.1	13.8	27.6	10.3	6.3
Question 10: Being a member of a political party has helped my business and social life.	3	1	7	6	12	10.3	3.4	24.1	20.7	41.4	10.5
Question 11: Federal elections are more important than provincial ones.	2	6	12	4	5	6.9	20.7	41.4	13.8	17.2	8.8
Question 12: Capital punishment should be reinstated in the Canadian criminal code.	4	6	1	5	13	13.8	20.7	3.4	17.2	44.8	10.2
Question 13: Competing federal and provincial interests are a problem inside the Liberal Party in Manitoba.	3	9	7	4	6	10.3	31.0	24.1	13.8	20.7	6.3
Question 14: Bilingualism in the long run has been good for Canada.	9	9	5	2	4	31.0	31.0	17.2	6.9	13.8	8.8

Appendix A
Pre-Election Questionnaire

Question 15: Military boot camps for young offenders are a good idea.	3	6	6	3	11	10.3	20.7	20.7	10.3	37.9	7.7
Question 16: The Liberal Party in Manitoba should be divided into separate federal and provincial wings.	4	2	3	7	13	13.8	6.9	10.3	24.1	44.8	11.6
Question 17: Any new arena in Winnipeg should be built without public money.	17	6	2	3	1	58.6	20.7	6.9	10.3	3.4	15.7
Question 18: My parent(s) were involved in politics and it seemed natural for me to become active in the Liberal party.	0	4	3	3	19	0.0	13.8	10.3	10.3	65.5	18.2
Question 19: Manitoba receives the same level of federal support as other provinces.	2	4	9	8	6	6.9	13.8	31.0	27.6	20.7	7.7
Question 20: If elected in Manitoba, a Liberal government's economic policies would be closer to the N.D.P.	2	2	10	11	4	6.9	6.9	34.5	37.9	13.8	13.0
Question 21: Natives, Women and visible minorities are systematically discriminated against in Canada.	1	8	7	7	6	3.4	27.6	24.1	24.1	20.7	6.6
Question 22: The Liberal Party in Manitoba is too strongly centered in Winnipeg and does not pay enough attention to its rural constituencies.	8	7	5	7	2	27.6	24.1	17.2	24.1	6.9	6.3
Question 23: If elected in Manitoba, a Liberal government's economic policies would be closer to the Progressive Conservatives.	2	6	10	4	7	6.9	20.7	34.5	13.8	24.1	7.7
Question 24: The party executive does not listen to its constituency associations enough.	5	5	9	8	2	17.2	17.2	31.0	27.6	6.9	7.4
Question 25: Leadership and policy conventions are good for the party even if they show disagreement among party members.	14	9	5	0	1	48.3	31.0	17.2	0.0	3.4	15.7
Question 26: As a member of the Liberal Party I would say my interests are best represented by the left wing of the party.	2	8	10	5	4	6.9	27.6	34.5	17.2	13.8	8.8
Question 27: A provincial leader should not challenge a federal Liberal government even if the provinces interest are at stake.	0	1	2	8	18	0.0	3.4	6.9	27.6	62.1	19.9
TOTALS	123	146	167	147	200						

Appendix B Post-Election Questionnaire

Survey Data

1. I have been a member of the Liberal Party for 11.7 years.
2. I worked for (56 campaigns were represented) campaign during the 1995 election.
3. I devoted 7.3 hrs a day to the 1995 provincial campaign.
4. This is the 4th provincial campaign that I have worked on.
5. During the 1993 Federal campaign and I worked as:
a. Candidate (3.%) b. Campaign Chair (5.2%) c. Official agent (2.5%) d. Office Manager (3.0%)
e. Poll Captain (7.6%) f. General Volunteer (35.8%) g. Other (15.3% / 6.4% no involved)
6. During the 1995 Provincial campaign I worked as:
a. Candidate (33.3%) b. Campaign Chair (32.0%) c. Official agent (7.8%) d. Office Manager (1.0%)
e. Poll Captain (0.%) f. General Volunteer (12.8%) g. Other (8.9%)
7. The approximate age of the volunteers working in my campaign was:
a. 14 to 20 (7.6%) b. 21 to 30. (12.8%) c. 31 to 40. (32.05%) d. 41 to 50. (61.5%) e. 51 + (23.0%)
8. In my campaign office we used the following computer program to track voters.
a. Campaign On Disk (32%) b. Marked List (30%) c. Don't know (16.6%)
9. We used the following types of computers in my campaign headquarters.
a. 8088 b. 386 ^{29%} (64%) c. 486 (47.4%) d. Pentium e. Mac (2.5%)
10. Computers used during the campaign at my headquarters were: (Circle one)
a. Rented (29%) b. Purchased (7.6%) c. Donated (19.2%) d. Borrowed (32.05%)
11. My constituency association started fundraising activities approx.:
a. One year or more before the election (17.9%) b. Six months before election (43.5%)
c. Three months before the election (3.8%) d. Two months before election (3.8%)
e. One month before the election (15.3%) f. The day of the writ. (12.2%)
12. In my own campaign headquarters our biggest problem was:
a. Shortage of volunteers (50%) b. Shortage of computers (2.5%) c. Location
d. Lack of policy information (43.5%) e. Lack of computer training (6.4%) f. Other

13. I felt the computer database supplied by Constituency Services (Marked List) was useful in identifying and getting out the Liberal vote on E-Day. Disagree (71%)

14. During the campaign all rural and urban constituencies were given equal support by the Campaign Team. Disagree (66%)

15. I would rate the following aspects of the 1995 campaign as:

a. The "Red Book"	(2.5%)	(29.4%)	(34.6%)	(12.8%)	(19.2%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
b. TV Commercials	(0.0%)	(16.6%)	(24.3%)	(39.7%)	(15.3%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
c. Newspaper Ads	(0.0%)	(25.6%)	(41.0%)	(30.7%)	(6.4%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
d. Campaign Literature (general)	(0.0%)	(14.1%)	(48.7%)	(23.0%)	(8.9%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
e. First Brochure (Candidate Bio)	(5.1%)	(32.5%)	(30.7%)	(17.9%)	(12.8%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
f. Second Brochure (Red Book Summary)	(1.2%)	(8.9%)	(32.0%)	(28.2%)	(28.2%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor

16. In my dealings with Campaign HQ I would rate the efficiency of the following areas as:

a. Constituency Services	(5.1%)	(16.6%)	(19.2%)	(24.3%)	(24.3%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
b. Policy / Research section	(2.5%)	(8.9%)	(17.9%)	(34.6%)	(32.0%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
d. E.R.C. (Staff)	(0.0%)	(8.9%)	(26.9%)	(23.0%)	(21.7%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
f. Leaders Tour	(2.5%)	(7.6%)	(24.3%)	(21.7%)	(28.2%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor
g. Campbell House (Staff /Volunteers)	(24.3%)	(33.3%)	(24.3%)	(2.5%)	(2.5%)
	Excellent /	Good /	Average /	Below Average /	Poor

17. The Liberal Party in Manitoba lost the 1995 provincial election for the following reasons:

a. Unfocused campaign strategy (89.7%)	b. Media bias (16.6%)	c. Policy (51.2%)
d. Poor planning/problem solving (69.2%)	e. Poor communications within the party (51.2%)	
f. Weak Constituency Associations (29.4%)	g. Other (organization) (24.3%)	

18. The 1995 provincial election was lost at the constituency level. Disagree 87.1%

19. The most important issues facing the Liberal Party in Manitoba today are:

a. Economic Growth (35.8%)	b. Migration of population (14.1%)	c. Health Care (32.0%)
d. Social Policy reform (16.6%)	e. Taxes (10.2%)	f. Education (34.6%)
g. Other (justice) (14.1%)	(Itself:the Party) (27.1%)	

APPENDIX C

Report to Provincial Council

INTRODUCTION:

As research for a MA thesis on Liberal party Organization and the effect of technology on the 1995 provincial campaign a post election questionnaire was sent to Candidates, Campaign Chairs, Official Agents, Federal and Provincial Constituency Presidents, as well as members of the Executive. The purpose of this questionnaire, and the focus of this report, was an attempt to assess organizational difficulties experienced by the campaign and the future direction of the Liberal Party in Manitoba. The full results are tabulated in **ANNEX B** and what follows is a summation of comments provided in the space below questions 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20.

EXPERIENCED VOICES:

Out of a potential sample of 231 respondents, 82 questionnaires or 35.5 percent were returned and tabulated. This response rate reflects an earlier pre-election questionnaire that had a response rate of 39.4 percent and should be considered average. The breakdown of respondents and what positions they held in the 1995 campaign included Candidates (33.3%), Campaign Chairs (32.0%), General volunteers (12.8%), Office Managers (3.0%), Official Agents (7.8%), Poll Captains (1.0%), and Others (8.9%).

On average, those that responded to the questionnaire have been members of the Liberal party for over 11 years, spent 7.3 hours a day on the provincial campaign and worked on 4 previous campaigns. More importantly, out of 82 questionnaires, 56 out of 57 constituencies were represented making this a particularly representative sample of Liberals from across the province.

The comments from these Liberals were generally constructive, thoughtful, and provide an excellent organizational analysis of the campaign including many of the challenges facing the Liberal Party in Manitoba in the future. Because of the number of comments, for each question in which comments were solicited, a trend is identified and the best comments chosen by the researcher, unaltered and shown in highlighted text have been provided.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS:

Question 12: In my campaign headquarters our biggest problem was:

From the tabulated data the biggest problem identified at the constituency level was a lack of volunteers. It was also noted that as the campaign drew on it became increasingly more difficult to motivate them. This, in some cases, was related to the lack of communication with campaign headquarters and the inability to get policy information. Lack of volunteers can also be attributed to an aging party membership as indicated by the responses to question seven. Most volunteers at the constituency level

were over forty and youth of the party, during the campaign, were conspicuous by their absence.

We had difficulty recruiting volunteers. This was partly owing to a late start in recruitment and a small membership base. A more important factor, though, appears to have been ambivalence towards the provincial campaign. There was little to motivate voter support, much less volunteers.

Question 13: I felt the computer database supplied by Constituency Services (Marked List) was useful in identifying and getting out the Liberal vote on E-Day.

71 percent of the respondents felt the database program was of little use to their campaign. It was described as “buggy” often losing hours of data entry work. Many campaigns abandoned this program in favor of a manual method. “Otherwise it was more a toy than a tool.” Those campaigns that used “Campaign on Disk” reported more success and felt the program useful.

In the end we used a combination of manual computation and Microsoft Excel for Windows. We initially tried the Marked List program but it was USELESS AND A WASTE OF TIME. The developers should have consulted experienced campaign workers on a suitable program (searching for names/date difficult, data entry cumbersome, no documentation given)... This is an area where the party must improve. see note one.(1) The Party should consider looking into the program used by Gary Kowalski’s campaign. Hey, he won.

Question 14: During the campaign all rural and urban constituencies were given equal support by the campaign team.

While 66 percent of the respondents indicated that they disagreed with this statement it should be noted that this is a particularly weak question. Many respondents disagreed with the statement but felt they did not have enough information from other campaigns to make a qualified judgement. Rural candidates on the other hand were more direct in their assessment and felt they received little support, but lack of support from campaign central was also a common complaint from urban constituencies.

The “we can form a government without winning any rural seats in theory” mentality prevailed. Lip-service was given rural, but nobody really listened to what was being said.

Although one cannot be accurate on this question my perception was that rural candidates did not receive much support - on the other hand neither did we.

How can we know if all constituencies received equal support? (Frankly, this is a stupid question.) I can only speak for my own constituency. We felt ignored throughout the campaign. Much of the small amount of attention we did receive was received negatively.

Question 17: The Liberal Party in Manitoba lost the 1995 provincial election for the following reasons:

Question 18: The 1995 provincial election was lost at the constituency level.

These two questions drew the greatest number of comments and were designed to be complementary to each other. 89.7 percent of the respondents indicated an un-focused campaign strategy was the primary cause followed by poor planning/problem solving (69.2%). 51.2 percent felt the lack of a well thought-out Policy, Policy information and poor communications within the Party were the main reason behind the loss. This is related directly to the policy process, the use of Voice Mail at Campaign Headquarters and the inability of many respondents to actually talk to someone about policy. Only 29.4 percent indicated weak Constituency Associations were a problem. By comparison 87.1 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the election was lost at the constituency level.

The general assessment was Campaign Headquarters lost the election. This trend must be viewed with some qualifications. Elections are amazingly complex and campaigns, like war, are planned well in advance with the best intelligence available at the time. Hindsight, on the other hand is perfect, but rarely available when important decisions are made. Human nature also makes it unlikely that a Campaign Manager or Candidate would attribute their loss to problems within their own campaigns. Nonetheless, the comments provided an interesting view of some of the organizational factors that contributed to the Party's poor showing in the election.

The central issue of the 1995 provincial election was leadership - by which I mean collective leadership not just the party leader. A combination of factors - including an unfocused strategy, irrelevant policy pronouncements, poor communication, weak organization - came together to convince most Manitoba voters that the Liberals were incapable of governing or providing effective opposition, hence our third place showing.

Communication within the Party was one way, each day we received volumes of faxes on a wide variety of subjects without one ever becoming a main issue. Our inquiries were often unanswered or done days later. Planning was poor - a media type person was required on Paul Edwards' team - & not there. His lack of experience showed up, even though he was a great candidate.

With the exception of Policy which was developed on the fly, the election was well planned. When the writ was dropped we didn't follow the plan. Strategy was unfocused, internal communications were not considered a priority and as a result delivery from campaign central on this service was worse than poor. For the first time in several campaigns there was no ethnic campaign. This was a major mistake. There was a media bias against the Liberals, but given the above it may have been justified.

Question 19: The most important issues facing the Liberal Party in Manitoba are:

In order respondents listed Economic Growth (35.8%), Education (34.6%), Health Care (32.0%), Social Policy Reform (16.6%), Migration of Population (14.1%) and Taxes (10.2%) as the most important issues facing the Party. A significant trend in answering this question was the emphasis, not asked for, on the issue of justice (14.1%) and the need to rebuild the Party organization (27.1%). Comments emphasized that all the above issues were important to Manitobans in general but the primary concern of the Party should be its survival.

The most important issue facing the Liberal Party in Manitoba is re-organization, re-focus; we obviously need to get our own house in order.

Probably the most important issue is to “try” to re-build the Liberal Party in Manitoba. Without official Party status and research capabilities - what can be done: re the above for points.

At the present time we can do very little with the above regardless of how we rate them. We must set out an action Plan: for Manitoba, and the people of Manitoba. The Party needs more advisors from all parts of Manitoba.

None of the six issues identified are as important to the liberal Party at the present moment as the pressing issue of Party survival and organization. (These issues are important of course, to Manitobans in general). At the present time, we seem to lack the organization and the vision to address the other issues very effectively. Since the NDP has usurped health care as its own issue, we would do well to focus on economic growth (especially “jobs”) as the Liberals’ primary issue. But to do so effectively, we must improve our own organization first.

Question 20: What specific strategies should the Liberal Party in Manitoba employ over the next five years to address the issues in question 19.

Responses to this question were direct and usually given in point form. They comprised what the respondents felt the direction the Liberal party should take for the next five years. Rebuilding the Party and returning it to grassroots was by far the overwhelming theme. Because many of these points were complementary the following is a summation of the most common themes.

1. Work together to articulate a shared vision and mission for the Liberal Party in Manitoba. Avoid wasted effort trying to lay blame for the 1995 election.
2. Establish long and short term goals. An action plan that will define problem areas, and a mission statement of what the Liberal Party in Manitoba means for Manitobans and how Liberals differ from the NDP & PCs.
3. Establish a “By-Election S.W.A.T. team” so that we are ready to claim a fourth

seat and official party status at the first opportunity. This should include targeting those ridings that will fall to the Liberals in the year 2000.

4. Build a strong(er) constituency associations across Manitoba reaching out to groups that were alienated by the PC cuts and those who don't trust the NDP to run the economy effectively. Work towards getting small businesses to identify Liberals as their party, expanding our appeal as a party of pragmatic and practical solutions.
5. Demonstrate to the people of Manitoba, by electing identified Liberals to municipal/city councils and school boards, that the Liberal Party in Manitoba can provide responsible government.
6. Develop an effective grassroots (rural/urban) policy/research process that will identify relevant issues for the next election in the year 2000.
7. Develop a communications plan and utilize technology so that provincial Liberal policy is not secret or delivered 3 weeks into the election.
8. Support elected MLAs and follow their leadership so they can represent the 24% of the population who voted Liberal.
9. Be prepared, when necessary, to stand as the Party that represents Manitobans, not the interests of the federal party.
10. Take a lesson from the NDP and PCs to learn how to run an effective provincial campaign.

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