

User Services

TOP STORIES

Front Page

By Section

COMPLETE
COVERAGE

(Archived for 7 days)

Business

Canada and World

Detour

Editorial Pages

Entertainment

Life

Local

Sports

The Tab

The View
From the West

FEATURES

Automotive
Showcase

Books

Columns

Comics

Computers &
Technology

Crossword Puzzles

Faith

Fashion

Food and Recipe
Swap

Homes

Movie Reviews and
Listings

Restaurant Reviews
and Listings

Stock Quotes

Town & Country

Travel & Leisure

TV Listings

Video Reviews

Winnipeg
Neighbours

SERVICES
(Available to All)

Automotive Picture
Listings

Careers

Classifieds

Winnipeg Free Press

ONLINE EDITION

Search today's Business for

GO

Search our 7-day Archive and Special Sections [Advanced Search](#)

Search our News Archive [HELP](#)

THE VIEW FROM THE WEST

A FORUM FOR IDEAS AND OPINION

Mulroney divorce finalized?

Thu Dec 4 2003

By DALE SWIRSKY



Why is this man smiling?

PROPOSERS of the merger between the Canadian Alliance and the Tories insist that healing the rift in the old Mulroney coalition will allow the new party to compete for power. But there's little supporting evidence for this claim.

Recently, Alliance support has been in the 10- to 15-per-cent range. In 1984, the Mulroney Conservatives won 50 per cent of the vote. Where has this vote gone, and how much of the Alliance's support comes from Mulroney's old coalition of Quebec separatists, Western conservatives (both social and economic) and Ontario middle-of-the-roads?

Much of the Alliance's support in rural B.C., Saskatchewan and the Interlake and Dauphin ridings of Manitoba actually comes from traditional NDP voters. In the 1988 election, the NDP won 19 of 32 B.C. ridings and 10 of 14 Saskatchewan ridings. Since most of these seats are now Alliance, some of its support must come from former NDP voters.

Factor in a small slice of the traditional Liberal vote migrating to the Alliance and it's clear that of the

THE VIEW
FROM THE WEST
A FORUM
FOR IDEAS & OPINION

winnipegfree
WFP
A great place
to advertise!

Winnipeg
Free Press
CAREER
ONLINE

Stock Quotes Search

Enter stock symbol

- ☒ Toronto Stock Exchange
☐ TSX Venture Exchange

To search for a company name, [click here](#)

Driven by TELUS

fp
NEWSPAPERS INC.
www.fpnewspapers.com

Winnipeg Free Press
ext

[Contests](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Special Sections](#)
[Weather](#)
[INFORMATION](#)
[\(Available to All\)](#)
[Advertising](#)
[Information](#)
[Contact the Free](#)
[Press](#)
[History of the Free](#)
[Press](#)
[Home Delivery](#)
[Subscription](#)
[Microfilm Archives](#)
[Online News](#)
[Archive](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Send a Letter to the](#)
[Editor](#)
[Search Help](#)
[Advanced Search](#)
[Log Out](#)

[Site Comments](#)

12.5 per cent of Canadian voters who currently support the Alliance, at most eight or nine per cent derive from the Mulroney coalition of the 1980s and early '90s.

Recently, Tory support has been at 15 to 20 per cent, and it's safe to assume that most of this is from the Mulroney coalition. Most Bloc Quebecois voters -- now about eight to 10 per cent of Canadians -- are from the Mulroney coalition as well, but traditional Liberal voters also make up several points of that support.

Add it all up and the conclusion is inescapable: the federal Liberals have attracted the largest number of Mulroney voters since the coalition broke up. Moving sharply to the right of the PC party, as the new Conservative Party of Canada is certain to do, will not win back Mulroney supporters who have gone to the Liberals or the Bloc. And moving to the right will also alienate many current Tory voters whose value systems are oriented more towards the Liberals than the Alliance.

Studies comparing the values held by Alliance and Tory voters find that, while both claim to be conservatives, they have little else in common. Alliance supporters tend to strongly identify with their region, hold an eat-or-be-eaten view of the world and support the traditional family. They see government as a negative force and have a strong desire to radically change society to avert a feared chaotic future. In contrast, Tory supporters tend to identify with Canada as a whole and with self-reliance, desire to understand society and are open to non-traditional families. They do not have a pronounced negative view of government and fear that radical change will lead to chaos, not avert it.

These value differences between the two parties are exhibited in their attitudes toward recent issues. On the Iraqi war, same-sex marriage, spending surpluses and funding for health care and the unemployed, there are large differences between Tory and Alliance voters. On every issue, Tory, Liberal and NDP supporters had views more similar to each other than to the Alliance (Enviroics 10/03).

Consensus

It is my contention that moderate NDP, Liberal and Tory supporters have essentially agreed upon a Canadian consensus that the market and government are both to be highly valued, and that Canada should be a pluralistic society. The differences between the three groups are essentially differences of degree, not of kind. They all agree on what the key ingredients are for Canadian success -- they just differ on the quantities to be used.

The differences between most Alliance and Tory supporters are not differences of degree, but differences of kind. Each has a radically different view of government, change and social issues.

Note that these are studies of voters, not the party elites or members who, in their rush to ratify the merger, are surely out of step with their own supporters. While Brian Mulroney, Peter MacKay, Preston Manning and others claim that "we have much in common" because their followers self-identify as conservatives, they will find that mixing the two together will be like trying to unite water and oil -- they might both be liquids, but they don't mix very well.

The result will be an increased Liberal majority under Paul Martin, and this won't surprise students of "second-choice" voting patterns. Tory voters consistently choose the Liberals as their second choice by a 2:1 to 3:1 ratio over the Alliance.



Dynamic

Recent polls illustrate this dynamic. Support for a merged-right was initially high, partly because the hypothetical is usually more appealing than the reality and partly because many Liberal voters are open to supporting something like the PC party -- the Tories are the leading second choice for Liberals (EKOS). But once it became apparent that the new party will be another Reform makeover, Liberal supporters deserted it, as have many Tories. Since the merger talks, PC support has dropped from 19 to 16 per cent, and last week's poll had a united right at only 21 per cent if led by Bernard Lord or Peter MacKay.

The Liberals, meanwhile, would be at 49 per cent with a "divided" right, but at a whopping 55 to 59 per cent with a "united" right, depending on who leads the new Conservative party (SES Research). This week's SOM poll shows the merged party's continuing decline in support: the Liberals have jumped to 58 per cent, the NDP is at 18 per cent and the new Conservative Party is at 13 per cent -- about the same as the Alliance's previous level of support. The logical conclusion is that many Tory voters are supporting the Liberals, not the new party.

The lesson is that one does not build a successful coalition around its most extreme point. By attempting to do this, merger advocates will not have healed the Mulroney split -- they will have finalized the divorce.

Dale Swirsky a Winnipeg high-school teacher, says he may soon join many others as a former PC riding executive member, former PC donor, former PC campaigner and former PC member.

[Return to Top](#)
[Return to Index](#)



email
this
story



printer
friendly
version

[Front Page](#) | [Top Stories](#) | [Advanced Search](#)
[Business](#) | [Canada and World](#) | [Detour](#) | [Editorial Pages](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Life](#) | [Local News](#)
| [Sports](#) | [The Tab](#) | [The View from the West](#)
[Automotive Showcase](#) | [Books](#) | [Columns](#) | [Computers & Technology](#) | [Contests](#) | [Faith](#) |
[Fashion](#)
[Food and Recipes](#) | [Homes](#) | [Movies](#) | [Restaurants](#) | [Travel & Leisure](#) | [Video](#) | [Winnipeg](#)
[Neighbours](#)
[Auto Picture Listings](#) | [Careers](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Special Sections](#) | [Weather](#)
[Advertising Information](#) | [Contact the Free Press](#) | [History of the Free Press](#)
[Home Delivery Subscription](#) | [Microfilm Archives](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

© 2004 Winnipeg Free Press. All Rights Reserved.