

Conservative Party Organization and the Democratic Deficit

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## Conservative Party Organization and the Democratic Deficit

Declining voter turnout, levels of public trust, and general satisfaction with democratic government have been widespread throughout the developed world since the 1970s. As far as political parties are concerned, three conditions are usually seen to underlie this political malaise. The first is the reduction in the autonomy of parties in government: globalization limits the autonomy of the state in the economy generally and the increased power of the judiciary and bureaucracy limit the legislative and executive branches of government. A second set of changes threatens the ability of parties to be attached to the electorate: a decline in partisan identification, a shift towards post-materialism that makes the political landscape more difficult for parties to structure for voters, and a general sense that political parties do not offer voters genuine alternatives. Finally, party organizations have developed in a way that gives professionalized party elites great power while reducing party activists to little more than potential financial donors.<sup>1</sup>

Comparing Canadian conservative parties to conservatives in other countries allows us to better understand the first (declining state autonomy) and third (professionalized party organization) factors more accurately and raises an important puzzle.<sup>2</sup> Conservative parties in both Canada and the United States have moved themselves out of permanent opposition status since the 1970s precisely by seeking to limit state autonomy and by leading the way in developing professionalized party organizations.<sup>3</sup> They have been successful in electoral competition precisely by articulating a program and organizing themselves in a way that is seen to be symptomatic of systematic malaise. However, the very success of this agenda at mobilizing voters should, I want to suggest, should make us careful about how we understand the democratic deficit. This suggestion is grounded not only in the mere fact of right-wing success but also in its character which, at least in Canada and the United States, could almost be taken as the transformation of the radical right of 1980 into the establishment right of today. That is to say, economic views about the role of the state that thirty years ago were seen as radical have now become mainstream while movements that sought to combine conservative economics with populist critiques of political institutions -- like the New Right in the United States and the Reform Party in Canada -- have been folded into political parties operating in a very

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1 Grant Amyot, 'The Waning of Political Parties,' in *Canadian Politics in Transition 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*, ed. Alain-G. Gagnon and A. Brian Tanguay (Peterborough: Broadview, 2007), 496-509

2 My hope is that the final version of this paper will include the United Kingdom and Australia. As it stands now, though, the comparison will be only be between Canada and the United States.

3 More in the United States than in Canada, they have also benefited as the breakdown in partisan loyalties hurt the Democrats and Liberals (with their deeper roots in the electorate during the post-war era) more than it did the smaller parties of the right.

conventional office-seeking manner and which have muted critiques of the existing system as undemocratic.

This paper begins with a consideration of how conservatives approach the question of the democratic deficit. It then turns to consider how conservative parties in Canada and the United States have evolved organizationally over the last thirty years. In both countries, conservative parties have become stronger organizations and more important in both legislative and policy terms. They have taken new organizational forms -- as service<sup>4</sup>, franchise<sup>5</sup>, or garrison<sup>6</sup> parties -- as a result of this evolution, but have emerged as stronger and more focused on winning office than they were in 1980. The conclusion sets out some preliminary reflections on this evolution and what it means for how we evaluate party organizations and their contributions to democracy, which can be briefly summarized as a set of pluralist questions about the textbook picture of parties and the democratic deficit in Canada.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Conservative Ideology and the Democratic Deficit***

While there are some important differences in ideology between conservatives in Canada and the United States during the period under consideration (perhaps especially on moral issues and foreign policy) what matters for us here are some important similarities in how they understand the role of the state and the meaning of democracy. In both countries, conservatives have called for the shifting of power from governments to the free market. In the democratic deficit literature, this reduction in state autonomy contributes significantly to public disenchantment with the political system. If the state cannot do anything, and many leaders portray it as doing anything that it does do as being done badly, then it follows that there is considerable incentive for any attentive citizen to check out of the process entirely. Before the 1980s, many Red Tories, liberal Republicans, and 'wet' conservatives could be found in conservative parties who would have shared these concerns. After Thatcher, Reagan, and Mulroney, conservative parties and elites have been united in advocating for a reduction in the size and role of the state. Conservatives sought a configuration of state and market that

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4 John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

5 R. K. Carty, 'The Politics of Tecumseh Corners,' *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 35 (December 2002), 723-45.

6 Flanagan, this panel.

7 Works that directly address Canadian parties from the democratic deficit perspective include Brian A. Tanguay, 'Reforming Representative Democracy: Taming the 'Democratic Deficit,' in *Canadian Politics* 5<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 249; Grant Amyot, 'The Waning of Political Parties,' 496-509; R. Kenneth Carty, William Cross, and Lisa Young, *Rebuilding Canadian Party Politics*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000); and William Cross, *Political Parties*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

prioritized individual freedom by reducing regulation, maximized growth by encouraging competition, sought freer trade between nations, and was relatively unconcerned with inequality.

What state was left after the its limitation by the market was, many conservatives hoped, controllable directly by the citizenry. This meant mechanisms of direct democracy like plebiscites, referendum, and recall. While American conservatives have had the most luck in implementing such measures, a desire for direct democracy was also a very strong influence on the Canadian Reform Party. By bypassing elites, conservatives hoped that such mechanisms would return political power to the 'silent majority'. If all elites were somewhat problematic for conservatives, civil servants and judges were especially disconcerting. That these non-elected officials were seen to have encouraged both the growth of state regulation and progressive social agendas like feminism.

That power should be shifted from them was commonly held by conservatives and was one of the primary motivations for their desire to reduce the power of government as a whole. For those parts of government that could not, or should not, be outsourced or downsized, there was less of an consensus amongst conservatives about governance solutions. In theory, they wanted to see power returned to the legislative branch so that those most directly the people's representatives could make important decisions. In practice, they seem to have found themselves shifting power to the executive branch, especially at those times when they control it. Some part of this problem of implementing their agenda as to where the power of elected government should lie must be seen to sit with the relative absence of consideration give to political parties in conservative thinking during this period. While conservatives were to prove exceptionally able when it came to creating party organizations and running campaigns, where the parties they ran fit into their vision of democracy was less clearly thought out. At times, usually when conservatives were in opposition, party politicians were lumped in with other elites who opposed genuine democracy. At other times, usually when conservatives were successful, commitment to party trumped ideology as conservative politics focused solely on winning office. At either time, party seems to have been thought of simply as a vehicle for conservatives rather than a type of organization that can make an independent contribution to political life. With the partial exception of the Reform Party, thinking of parties as vehicles means that conservatives have been unified in understanding them in office-seeking terms and behaving accordingly. This lack of concern for the internal effects of party organization has helped, it seem, conservatives in both countries develop party organizations focused solely on winning office. As a result, they have led in the development of the type of party organization that is seen as damaging in the literature on the democratic deficit.

## *Canada*

Canadian party politics is marked by parties with extremely strong leaders, consistently high levels of party discipline on policy, a franchise approach to the selection of party personnel, and the cadre organization of its major parties. These parties are highly centralized and are frequently criticized for giving only a minimal role in making policy to ordinary members.<sup>8</sup> Especially when in government, both the Liberals and Conservatives have a tendency to let the grassroots of their respective parties wither as their leadership focuses more on the Parliamentary

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8 cf. Cross, *Parties*.

party.<sup>9</sup> This tendency has repeatedly proven disastrous for the Conservatives (less often for the Liberals) as grassroots dissatisfaction episodically leads to the emergence of regionally based third parties that bring new ideas into the party system while threatening the survival of one or another of the existing major parties. The last occasion when the system suffered such a shock was 1993 when the Reform Party and Bloc Quebecois destroyed the Progressive Conservatives on the Prairies and in Quebec, respectively. For our purposes, the Reform Party is a particularly illuminating case as it challenged both the existing notions of how government ought to work in Canada on neo-liberal grounds and sought to create a populist and fully participatory party organization. The trajectory of conservative party organization in Canada since Reform is that of a return to an elite driven, brokerage process. Indeed, it is safe to describe the current Conservative Party of Canada as perhaps the most elite-driven and centralized party that Canada has yet seen.

As the second party of Canadian politics through most of the twentieth century, Canada's Conservatives have struggled both with being an electorally appealing alternative to the Liberals (especially in Quebec) and with George Perlin's famous Tory Syndrome -- the strong tendency to disunity in an opposition party.<sup>10</sup> The late 1960s and 1970s saw a particularly virulent form of the syndrome grip the party. Its origins lay in a struggle between John Diefenbaker, the party's leader, and Dalton Camp, the party organization president. Camp was eventually successful in forcing a leadership convention -- which choose Robert Stanfield as the party's leader in 1967 -- but, the narrow question of leadership review aside, his victory did little to increase the autonomy of the party's organization or give its grassroots more power. Instead, the party's internal life was dominated for the next fifteen years by an often acrimonious struggle between pro- and anti- Diefenbaker factions for control of the party. The personality driven nature of this discord meant that although the PCs during this period were on the technological leading edge in organizing their central office -- by 1984 the party ran regular survey research programs, direct-mail fund-raising, and was professionally organized -- it did little to move power out of the leader's office and into the party organization.

Joe Clark's seven years as leader was marked by his short time as a leader of a minority government in 1979-80 and continuing discord within the party over leadership. His successor, Brian Mulroney, would be much more electorally successful and moved Canadian public policy in a more conservative direction but saw his efforts at democratic reform -- embodied in the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords -- fail. His time as leader saw the party do very little, moreover, to change its cadre organization. This is perhaps not surprising, given the ambitious nature of his agenda on public policy and landslide electoral victories in 1984 and 1988, which suggested that the party's organization was more than satisfactory. The most important attempt at innovation was initiated by Jerry Lampert, the party's national Director between 1984 and 1986.

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9 For the Liberals, see Reg Whitaker, *The Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada 1930-58*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). For the Conservatives see Peter Woolstencroft, *The Progressive Conservative Party, 1984-1993: Government, Party, Members*. in Hugh Thurborn (ed.) *Party Politics in Canada*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 280-306.

10 George Perlin, *The Tory Syndrome: Leadership Politics in the Progressive Conservative Party*, (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1980), 190-203.

He sought to create a national membership list for the first time, to give the national headquarters more of a policy development role, and to initiate a program of non-election year publications and speakers tours to reach out to grassroots members of the party. These intended reforms met resistance from party elites, who were especially concerned that they might limit the autonomy of the leader. After Lambert left as director in 1986, his plans ossified, as did much of the party's central organization. While there were efforts from the Ontario wing of the party and a generalized concern that the central office's distance from its grassroots was helping the BQ and Reform, little was done to change this until after the disastrous 1993 campaign.<sup>11</sup>

It was only after the disaster of the 1993 election that a period of organization renewal began initiated by the new leader, Jean Charest. Charest's view was that a good part of the party's problems could be attributed to the isolation of its leadership from its grassroots, so his reforms focused on decentralizing and democratizing the party. The party organization, controlled by the grassroots, was to have much more significant control over policy and to have more input into fund-raising. The signal innovation of this period of renewal was the introduction of a direct election for the leadership, where each riding received 100 points to be distributed to leadership candidates proportionately based on their share of the vote in that riding. Charest's resignation in 1998 to lead the Quebec Liberals put this new system to an unexpectedly early test which saw Joe Clark return to lead the party. Clark's leadership saw most of the innovations introduced by Charest continued (though the party did chose a mixed individual vote/convention method of choosing its leader in 2003). However, the health of the party's organization was severely compromised by continuous financial challenges and inability to fully organize in more than a third of Canada's ridings -- problems which undoubtedly contributed to party's merger with the Canadian Alliance in 2003.<sup>12</sup>

The generalized dissatisfaction with Canada's political system in the late 1980s found its most important expression in the emergence of two regional parties -- the Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois -- from the wreckage of Mulroney's grand coalition in the 1993 election. The Reform Party combined its demand for a place for an improved place for the West in Canada with a vibrant populism. In its early days, it emphasized fiscal responsibility, democratic renewal, a Triple-E senate, and opposition to bilingualism -- characteristics that clearly placed the party on the right even as Preston Manning, its leader, tried to portray it as a trans-ideological populist entity. Of most interest here is that the Party tried to embody its commitment to grassroots democracy in its own organization. Institutionally, it had a flat organization, with no intermediary bodies between constituency associations and the national headquarters. It implemented a national membership list and a more open policy consultation process with its membership -- its policy conventions, for example, were open to all members. In the first flush of its 1993 breakthrough, it also tried to change Parliamentary behavior: the leader gave up his

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11 Woolstonecroft, 'The Progressive Conservative Party,' 284-298.

12 Peter Woolstencroft, 'Staying Alive: The Progressive Conservative Party Fights for Survival,' in Hugh Thorburn and Alan Whitehorn (eds.) *Party Politics in Canada* 8th ed. (Toronto: Pearson, 2001), 248-264 and Faron Ellis and Peter Woolstencroft, 'New Conservatives, Old Realities: The 2004 Election Campaign' in Jon Pammett and Christopher Dornan (eds.), *The Canadian General Election of 2004*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 2004), 66-106.

front-bench seat, MPs rejected many of the perks of office, and some undertook 'swearing-in ceremonies' where they promised to be bound by the views of their constituents.

These ideas were dramatic, but their effects even at the time were unclear and, ultimately, short-lived. As Ellis notes, the changes to party organization did result in a membership that felt much more a part of policy-making than in other parties. As many Reform Party members had previously belonged to other parties this can be seen as something of an advantage. Also, we will see below, the grassroots fund-raising strategy that followed from the party's organization and membership has provided Canadian conservatives with an enduring competitive advantage in the decade since Reform decommissioned. However, the party's populist organization also meant that it was effectively controlled by its leader. While Manning's ability to control all of the party's operations declined somewhat as its Parliamentary caucus gained experience, there is no doubt that his was the final voice and, in the absence of significant internal structure, he could usually overcome opposition to his wishes from inside the party. While a common feature of populist parties, the leader-dominated nature of Reform's organization suggest that -- especially if the party had ever formed government -- its organizational innovations were as unlikely to allow for an autonomous organization facilitating member engagement as the organizations of more conventional Canadian parties.<sup>13</sup>

The organizational history of the Canadian right since the Reform Party was transformed into the Canadian Alliance suggests that strong competitive pressure for Canadian parties to be organized in a cadre manner that minimizes the involvement of ordinary members. Both the Canadian Alliance and Conservative Party of Canada represent steps away from the attempt to emphasize direct public engagement in the name of garnering sufficient public support to win office. The conventional story of the transition from Reform to the Conservative Party of Canada is one focused on the dilution of Reform's Western focus, but the case can equally be made that it was a stepping back from populism and an emphasis on popular engagement as the goal of politics. Instead, the party has returned to a brokerage model both of policies in government, party organization, and method of approaching the electorate.

As an organization, the only remaining aspect of Reform's ostensible efforts to increase democratic engagement is the model of fund-raising used by the CA and CPC. Through the use of a sophisticated computer database enables the integration of voter identification and fund-raising. However, the organization that this fund-raising supports is essentially a finely tuned version of the traditional brokerage model. Power -- and policy direction -- in the party is extremely centralized, as Stephen Harper has successfully implemented party discipline that is extremely strong even by Canadian standards. This discipline, moreover, seems to be applied not only to the party's MPs and staff, but also down to the constituency level. The party still observes what Carty has described as the 'franchise bargain', but on terms that are fairly restrictive -- incumbents are protected from having their nominations challenged and the central party is closely involved in the affairs of constituencies seen to be possible gains in upcoming elections.

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13 on the Reform Party see Faron Ellis, *The Limits of Participation: Members and Leaders in Canada's Reform Party*, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005) and Tom Flanagan, *Waiting for the Wave: The Reform Party and the Conservative Movement*, 2nd ed., (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-University Press, 2009).

This model of permanent election carries over into the party's approach to its electorate. Unlike Reform's sunny vision of appealing to all Canadians if the party's leaders could simply bypass existing elites, the CPC has embraced a sophisticated (and expensive) version of the traditional brokerage strategy of appealing to Canadians as member of distinct subgroups holding clearly defined interests rather than as an undifferentiated whole. This can be seen both in some of the party's fiscal policies -- which have usually preferred narrow but easily identified tax incentives over wide ranging fiscal change -- and in its careful demographic profiling of potential voters.<sup>14</sup>

Attempts to move towards model of party organization in the Reform Party that gave more room for popular involvement foundered on a combination of electoral failure and a strong leader. In the decade since the demise of the Reform Party, the Canadian right has returned to a model of party organization very much in the centrally controlled and leader-dominated brokerage tradition. While Canadian public policy has undoubtedly moved to the right on fiscal policy and Reform's support was critical to the defeat of the Charlottetown Accord, little remains (aside from the possibility of a diluted version of Senate Reform) of its program of democratic renewal.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Canadian conservatives have focused on building a party organization focused on winning office that gives little attention to the affect that party organization might have at facilitating democratic involvement.

### *The United States*

Concern with declining levels of voter turnout and public trust, usually running along fault lines of class and race, have been as widespread in the United States as in Canada. While overall trends of civic participation are clearly downward, the place of American parties in these changes are the subject of considerable debate. These debates spring both from long-standing normative disagreements about about the role of parties in the American polity and analytic disagreements about how to understand their organizational structure. Scholarly debates around both of these points make establishing precisely what the character of American parties is -- in comparison to those of another country at any given time -- especially difficult. A more modest goal -- to identify the current debates about the proper role of parties in American parties and to identify trends in their development -- is more achievable. It points to striking similarities in how conservative parties in Canada and the United States have evolved as organizations, especially as regards those parts of party organizations usually seen to be related to the democratic deficit.

There is agreement on one important point: that the transformation in American party structure has been led by the Republicans. Their success at restructuring themselves has allowed them to successfully transformed themselves from America's minority party into its governing party. From about 1950 until 1980, the usual scholarly concern about American parties was that both

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14 Tom Flanagan, *Harper's Team: Behind the Scenes of the Conservative Rise to Power*, 2nd ed., (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009) for overview and Flanagan, *Waiting for the Wave*, 193-201 for analysis.

15 *ibid.*



parties were irresponsible. They presented programs that were too vague to structure the options facing voters in an ideologically coherent way. Activists were not given much of a role in the development of policy and parties seemed to do little to frame the behavior of senators and members of congress. These concerns strengthened during the 1970s and 1980s when a period of party decline set in. New campaign finance laws, the emergence of television as the primary way to appeal to voters, the final impacts of civil service reforms that eliminated patronage, and Congressional reforms all seemed to undercut the ability of parties to do much at all. Instead, American politics seemingly became a matter of candidates assembling teams personally loyal to them to contest office and interest groups and lobby groups acting as the major mobilizers of voters.

All the factors that led to a concern with the decline of party in the United States still exist. When compared to those of other countries, parties in the United States are still 'disparate, diffuse, and decentralized'.<sup>16</sup> However, developments since that time have led to a reassessment of the place of American parties. Rather than being portrayed as being in overall decline, unequivocal decline is now seen to have been limited to the party-in-elections as levels of stable voter identification have declined amongst voters. The party in government and party as organization have changed, to be sure, but in ways that make the parties more important in American politics than they were thirty years ago. In Aldrich's account, the service party emerged during the 1960s as parties lost their monopoly on the resources necessary to win office. Technological change, the de-alignment of the electorate, and organizational changes in the parties themselves (most noticeably the spread of the direct primary) allowed candidates to create their own organizations.<sup>17</sup> For our purposes, what is important is the emergence of a party organization that has

lost its effective monopoly, but ... retained a significant set of resources. Most important, perhaps, it retained the affiliation of ambitious politicians. Seemingly, in fact, it serves their ambitions better now than earlier....it remains important to the candidate by providing critical resources that only the Kennedys, Rockefellers, Perots, and movement leaders may otherwise possess. It can provide money....conduct polls...supply access to advertising resources....offer seminars or 'campaign colleges' for candidates and their staffs....can provide position papers, training on policy problems, and possible (partisan) solutions.'<sup>18</sup>

The Republicans have led the way in building this new sort of national party. In seeming perpetual minority status after Roosevelt's New Deal victories, the party's leadership consistently put more effort than its Democratic counterpart into building up a party organization capable of

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16 Samuel J. Eldersveld and Hanes Walton, *Political Parties in American Society*, 2nd ed., (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's).

17 John H. Aldrich. *Why Parties: The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 269-70.

18 *ibid.*, 273.

offsetting the Democrat's advantage in number of partisans in the electorate and seats in the House and Senate. Republican Presidents have worked particularly hard at the development of party organization.<sup>19</sup> The Republican National Committee led the way in the development of centralized training for county level leaders under Eisenhower, computer-aided direct mail fund-raising and voter contact under during the late 1970s, and networked voter outreach in the early 2000s. Each of these innovations was modeled directly on successful businesses -- in the early 1980s, the President of Amway was RNC chair and adopted the personal sponsorship model to party outreach, for example.<sup>20</sup> These developments have led to ideologically coherent party of stunning financial resources and real organizational whose successes have forced its powerful Democratic competitors to move in a similar direction, though the Democrats have maintained a more diverse internal structure that tries to do more to represent and include the various groups that make up that party's electoral coalition.

These innovations have made the party much more electorally competitive. As in Canada, it was also the subject of some debate between conservatives, with -- on two major occasions -- significant parts of the conservative coalition calling for ideologically motivated changes to party organization. The first time was in the late 1970s, when Ronald Reagan (then the spokesman for the conservative win of the party) opposed the 'big tent' emphasis on electoral success that the party reforms of Nixon and Ford embodied. This was only a passing opposition, for, as soon as he was in office, Reagan considerably extended party building and voter out-reach efforts so as to transfer his incredible personal popularity to the party. A more serious challenge to the in at all cost model of party organization occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the form of populist primary campaigns by Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson and the 1992 and 1996 third party challenge from Ross Perot. Far more ephemeral than the Canadian Reform Party, these efforts to give the grassroots of the party more of a role came to little.

While electoral success has been consistently prioritized over ideology or mass involvement in the party's organization, this has not stopped it from being a vehicle for conservative ideology in government. Republicans in the Senate and Congress have operated in a very disciplined manner since the 1980s, with the goal of shrinking the state. The importance of party in government has, somewhat ironically, led to concerns that American parties are now too responsible and have created a divided and polarized society.<sup>21</sup> The existence of these concerns should show that -- despite the decline of party in electorate -- that parties do play a powerful role in American politics. Their resurgence has been produced by trends in party organization similar to that of Canadian parties -- especially the Conservatives -- even if the differences between the two systems mean that the end state of the Republicans is quite different.

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19 Daniel J. Galvin, *Presidential Party Building: Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1-17.

20 Galvin, *Presidential Party Building*, 123.

21 cf. Paul Pierson and Jacob Hacker, *Off-Centre: The Republican Revolution and the Erosion of American Democracy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

## *Conclusion*

The various Canadian conservative parties and Republican Party have moved in similar directions organizationally over the last thirty years. In both countries, conservatives have become more disciplined in government, treat voters more like consumers, and give activists less room for involvement. Party leaders have gained more influence within party organization as professionalized staff, supported by extensive fund-raising, become more important (and successful) at turning out voters. A strong argument can be made that conservatives in both countries have also become more ideologically homogenous. These changes, along with shifts in the electorate, have taken right-wing parties out of permanent minority status and helped them successfully form government. In some ways, these trends can be taken as a continuation of Epstein's famous idea of the 'contagion from the right'<sup>22</sup> -- the notion that the driving force behind changes in party organization is the successful adaption of business models of organization by conservative parties rather than the adoption of mass style organizations by parties of the left.

Conservative parties either resisted or eventually subsumed efforts to move their organizations in a more populist direction. Despite efforts by the Reform Party (with important parallels to the Perot and Buchanan campaigns in the United States) in the early 1990s, populism simply did not offer the chances for electoral success that office-seeking model did. This is not simply a matter of choosing victory over principles, but also a simple matter of organizational capacity -- the franchise or service model of party organization is remarkably successful at fighting elections in ways models premised on extensive grassroots involvement seem not to be. Indeed, it is a model that is so successful that it has driven the Liberals and Democrats to follow the organizational innovations of conservative parties in an effort to remain electorally successful.

Understanding the nature of this renewed move to the right helps us link conservative ideology, through party organization, to public policy. The type of party organization described here functions very much in the same way that neo-liberal theory sees the state functioning -- the party elite steers, rather than rows; key functions are outsourced, and an over-arching focus is placed on maximizing profit (or votes). The success of this model of party organization both at winning office in competition with center-left parties and subsuming right-populist competitors provided the organizational capacity for the present generation of conservatives to win office without the danger of losing support to populists calling for radical change to the system. The disappearance of the populist right in the past decade, then, has been a matter both of ideological change on their part and of organizational success by more mainstream conservatives.

From this empirical observation follows a more analytic one: if the direction that office-seeking parties have evolved in for the last thirty years runs counter to what the literature on the democratic deficit suggests it ought to be, then perhaps those criteria need to be re-evaluated. In particular, perhaps we ought to give as much normative weight to competition between parties as the parties themselves do. This is not to suggest that competitive approaches have been absent from the study of Canadian parties.<sup>23</sup> Rather, it is to suggest both that there are good reasons that parties have evolved the organizations that they currently possess and that the competition

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22 Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1980).

between elites has a place in normative democratic theory that currently seems understated in considerations of the democratic deficit in Canada.

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23 For two very influential examples see Carty, 'The Politics of Tecumseh Corners' and Richard Johnston, 'Polarized Pluralism and the Canadian Party System,' *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 41 (December 2008), 815-834.