

Update to Chapter 3: Political Parties and Other Influential Groups

What's Next for the Canadian Alliance?

The Canadian Alliance has its first leader in Stockwell Day. His victory over Preston Manning in the leadership vote was something of a surprise. That may mean he should not be underestimated as he tries to become Prime Minister.

The next federal election is most likely to be called in the spring of 2001. Day's Liberal opponent will probably be Prime Minister Chrétien, though there are some who still predict Chrétien will step aside before the next election.

In any case, Day's challenge remains the same. To win power, he must begin by maintaining his base of support in Western Canada. That seems easily achievable. He will try to gain support in Québec and Atlantic Canada, but there's no evidence he will succeed. Atlantic Canadians generally favour a strong central government, and the Canadian Alliance believes in giving the provinces more powers at the expense of the federal government. In Québec, most races come down to the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois. The Reform Party has never come close to winning a Québec seat. The Alliance has very little to build on in the province.

All this means Stockwell Day's hopes rest in Ontario. The Liberals have won just about every seat in the province for two elections running. Doing that again is no easy task. The Alliance is hoping it can take away enough seats to form a government. The Liberals are likely to portray Stockwell Day as an extremist, out of step with most Canadians on social issues. A great deal will depend on what happens to Joe Clark and his Progressive Conservatives. The Liberals do so well in Ontario partly because the Conservatives and the Alliance split the "right-wing" vote. Liberals win pluralities in most ridings, not majorities. If the Conservatives collapse, and their vote swings to Stockwell Day, there is a chance he could become Prime Minister.

Follow-up Questions

1. This article represents how many political observers feel about the Canadian Alliance at the moment. But with the federal election still several months away, the political landscape could easily change. Monitor the Canadian Alliance between now and election time. Then, as the election nears, refer back to this article and consider the accuracy of its predictions.
2. Research and report on Stockwell Day's career as a politician. When did he first enter the political arena? What posts has he held? How would you characterize his leadership style?
3. Log onto the Canadian Alliance Web site at <www.canadianalliance.ca> to learn more about the party's political platform. What kinds of economic and social policies do the Alliance advocate? Where do they stand on environmental issues? Do you agree with them? Why? Why not?