

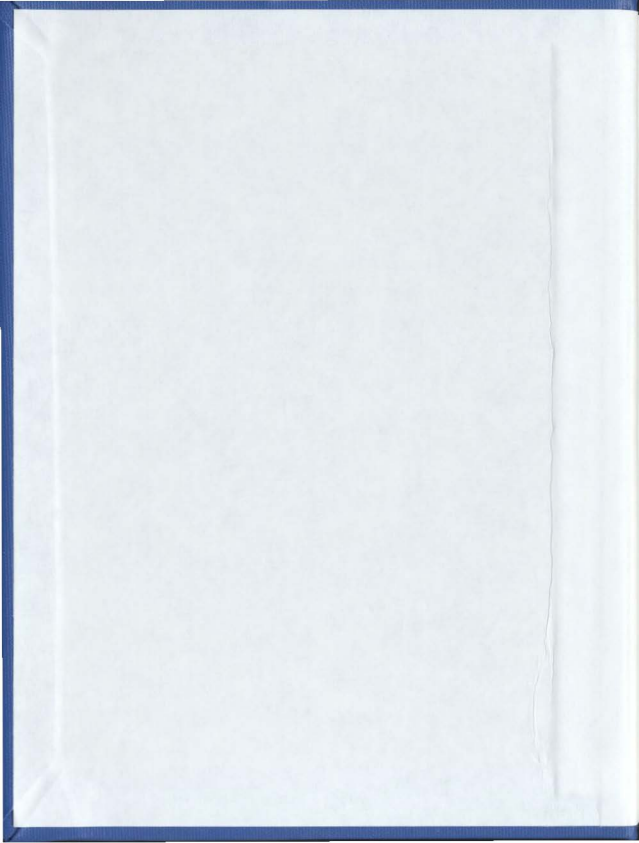
LEADERSHIP AND IDEOLOGY IN CONFLICT
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE
PARTY OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
1995-96

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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Leadership and Ideology in Conflict
An Analysis of
The Progressive Conservative Party of
Newfoundland and Labrador
1995-96

by

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the roles of factionalism and ideology as factors in the political defeat of the first female leader of the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. Lynn Verge was elected leader of the party in April 1995 by a narrow margin of three votes and defeated by the electorate of the province on February 22, 1996 before resigning as PC leader several days later.

This thesis argues that Lynn Verge's electoral defeat was preceded by internal factional infighting which denied her the opportunity to develop effective leadership. Historical issues affecting the leadership of the PC Party are examined, including the effects of accommodation and coalition-building on party ideology through both good times and bad – when the PC Party formed government and when they were in opposition. It is argued that the factionalism which split the party was just one of four factors which led to the defeat of the PC Party in the 1996 provincial election. The three contributing and inter-related factors which exacerbated the factionalism included: the opposition status of the PC Party between 1989 and 1996; the introduction of the ideology of feminism to a party already split along right-left conservative views; and the incapacity of Lynn Verge as leader when authority and legitimacy of leadership were denied her by the PC caucus.

The greatest influence on the PC Party in the period under study was the competing values of the two factions within caucus. These competing values became much more rigid when the influence of Lynn Verge's feminism caused those on the left of the conservative political spectrum to move slightly further to the left, and those on the right of the same spectrum to become resistant to attempts by Verge and her followers to change the party.

The PC Party had been in opposition to the governing Liberals from 1989, and an entrenched opposition syndrome worked against the party's efforts to establish itself as a viable alternative to the Liberals. The thesis argues that leadership of a political party is one of the key influences to mitigate against factional infighting and the opposition syndrome, and that Lynn Verge was denied the opportunity to lead because she failed – because of inaction – to meet the challenge of leadership, and she failed because she was denied the legitimacy of leadership by a divided caucus.

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
Ind. Lib.	Independent Liberal
Lib.	Liberal
Lib. Rfm.	Liberal Reform Party
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly
MUN PC Club	The Progressive Conservative Club on the campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland
NAC	The National Action Committee on the Status of Women
NDP	New Democratic Party
NLP	New Labrador Party
PC	Progressive Conservative

SOURCES AND INTERVIEW DATES

Jack Byrne	October 26, 1996
Kathy Dunderdale	September 12, 1996
Alvin Hewlett	October 16, 1997
Harvey Hodder	October 14, 1997
John Laschinger	August 17, 1996
Senator Gerald Ottenheimer	October 27, 1996
John Ottenheimer	October 10, 1996
Dr. Calvin Powell	October 26, 1996
Paul Shelley	October 26, 1996
Loyola Sullivan	October 10, 1996
Lynn Verge	April 9, 1997

1

Introduction

1.1 Leadership in Context: The Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland & Labrador

The Progressive Conservative (PC) Party of Newfoundland and Labrador elected a woman as party leader at its leadership convention held April 28-29, 1995. This was the first time any major Newfoundland and Labrador political party had elected a woman as leader. In less than a year, the PC Party suffered one of its worst political losses in twenty-three years, winning only nine seats in the legislature. One of the candidates to lose was the party's new leader, Lynn Verge.

This paper examines the reasons for the defeat of the party by analysing the leadership race which led up to the party's April 1995 leadership convention, the 302 days Lynn Verge was leader, and the party's losing campaign in the 1996 provincial election. The paper argues that one of the reasons the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador lost the 1996 provincial election was because it was divided internally along ideologically-based factions, and that this division was deepened because a woman had been elected party leader for the first time in its history.

Following Confederation with Canada in 1949, it would be more than twenty-three years before the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador was to win a major role in the political drama of Canada's tenth province. It had always played an insignificant second fiddle to Premier Joseph R. Smallwood. 'Joey' Smallwood dominated the province as Liberal premier from 1949 until 1972, when a cadre of old guard Tories and disenchanted former

Liberals finally unseated Smallwood and took power under leader Frank Moores.

Moores served three terms as Premier. His first term was in 1972 and followed the debacle of 1971 when Smallwood stubbornly clung to power and attempted to run a government even though the Tories had gained one more seat than the Liberals, with Tom Burgess of the New Labrador Party (NLP) holding the balance of power. Members were crossing or threatening to cross the floor of the House of Assembly almost every other day. The early 1970s were a tumultuous time in Newfoundland politics. Table 1 chronicles the rise of the Tories at the electoral expense of the once-powerful Liberal Party. The Tories finally

Table 1: Election Results by Seat - Newfoundland Legislature 1971-1975

	PC	Lib.	NLP	Lib. Ref.	Ind. Lib.	Total
1971	21	20	1	0	0	42
1972	33	9	0	0	0	42
1975	30	16	0	4	1	51

The number of seats in the legislature was increased to 51 just before the 1975 provincial election.

Source: John C. Crosbie. *No Holds Barred: My Life in Politics* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997) pp 86-131.

secured a tighter hold on government in the March 24, 1972 election when they won thirty-three seats to the Liberals' nine. The third term for the Moores-led Tories started on September 16, 1975 when, in a fifty-one-seat legislature, the PCs defeated the Liberals, led by Ed Roberts, winning a majority of nine seats. The Liberals took sixteen seats and the Liberal Reform Party, under Smallwood, won four, with one Independent Liberal. Analysts have suggested efforts by Smallwood to cling to power, by forming his Liberal Reform Party

rump, split what could have been a Liberal majority and ensured a Tory win as many seats were very closely contested.¹ Four years later Moores resigned and the party launched itself into a hotly contested leadership convention that was to define the future of the party from 1979 to the late 1990s. The convention chose Brian Peckford, the young and brash Minister of Mines and Energy in the Moores government. These were the days of early offshore oil exploration in the province, and Peckford was making a name for himself as a protector of Newfoundland's interests against both the federal government and the multi-national oil companies. His main rival was Bill Doody, a party stalwart with deep Tory roots. Peckford, on the other hand, had his start in politics as a Young Liberal.

Peckford was a leader whose star was rising. He brought the PC Party in new directions and re-established an iron law of politics in Newfoundland—a political party's longevity as government was based upon the strength of its leader. Like Smallwood before him, Peckford led Newfoundland and Labrador his way. Peckford ruled his party with the necessary ruthlessness to demand and receive loyalty from caucus and party members. After ten years, he resigned in 1989 leaving the party to go through yet another divisive leadership contest. The 1989 convention once again chose another former Liberal, as Tom Rideout narrowly won over his nearest rival, Len Simms. Meanwhile, the Liberal Party had reached back into its own political past and crowned former cabinet minister Clyde Wells as leader. Rideout called a quick election following his convention win, basing his decision on public

¹For a first-hand account of the Moores years, see John C. Crosbie, *No Holds Barred: My Life in Politics* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1997), particularly 86-131.

opinion polls which showed the PCs well ahead. The polls also predicted a Tory win just three days before the vote.²

But the quick election was a disaster for Rideout, for although the Tories narrowly won the popular vote, they lost the election.³ Rideout's watch at the helm of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador was to be just 44 days. He resigned as leader, and the party, still reeling from the election loss, appointed Rideout's convention rival, Len Simms, as interim leader. Simms' leadership was confirmed at a party convention some months later with little fan-fare and little media attention.

The early 1990s were not kind to the Progressive Conservatives. Liberal Premier Clyde Wells gained national prominence with his opposition to the failed Meech Lake Accord and his constitutional battles with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. The provincial Tories just could not compete with the national profile established by Wells. With Wells controlling the national agenda, and the Tories battered by their poor handling of a provincial issue — pay and pensions for the province's teachers — the Liberals under Wells had little trouble against

²There were two polls published a week before the April 20 vote. The Omnifacts Research Ltd. poll suggested the Tories could win a majority, as 52.1 percent indicated support for the PCs, 41.6 percent for the Liberals and 6.3 percent for the NDP. The results of the poll were published in The Evening Telegram April 15, 1989 on the front page under the headline: Enough for a solid majority: Poll gives PCs 11 point lead. (Pat Doyle, The Evening Telegram, April 15, 1989, 1.) A Research Associates poll, conducted for The Sunday Express and published the next day gave the PCs a six-point lead with 50 percent supporting the Tories, 43.9 percent supporting the Liberals and 6.1 percent for the NDP.

³The Liberals won thirty seats to the Tories' twenty-two while the New Democrats were shut out. (Source: The Evening Telegram, April 21, 1989, 1.) The story led off with the headline IT'S A LIBERAL MAJORITY! in large letters across the top of the front page.

Simms and his band of Tories in a provincial election called in May 1993.⁴ Disheartened and unable to rally Tory support, Simms announced he would resign in late 1994. His replacement was elected at a party convention on the weekend of April 28-29, 1995. Unlike the two previous PC leadership conventions in 1979 and 1989, with both having a healthy slate of candidates, the 1995 campaign attracted only two leadership contenders: Loyola Sullivan and Lynn Verge.

Sullivan was a relatively new Tory member of the House of Assembly. He was elected in the 1989 campaign in the district of Ferryland, a mostly-Catholic district on the "southern shore" of the Avalon Peninsula, south of St. John's, which had consistently voted Tory. He was well-liked by caucus colleagues and had a reputation as a hard worker. He had a varied background as a businessman, a merchant who worked the family fish trade with his brothers, and as a teacher and high school principal. Despite his reputation as a hard, dedicated worker, some felt he had one drawback. Coming from the southern shore, Sullivan spoke with the characteristic southern shore Irish lilt, a brogue which has lasted generations in rural parts of Newfoundland, particularly along the southern shore and into St. Mary's Bay. Some party insiders were concerned that the people of the province, particularly Protestant voters in once-Tory-strong St. John's and on the province's northeast coast, would have trouble warming up to Sullivan because of his dialect; particularly because Premier Clyde Wells, an Anglican and a constitutional lawyer, was well-spoken without any hint of an

⁴The Liberals won thirty-four seats to the Conservative's seventeen and the New Democrats' one. (Source: The Evening Telegram, Wells Wins in a Walk, May 4, 1993, 1).

accent.

Lynn Verge, although younger than Sullivan, was a veteran of the party's years of good fortune under Peckford. She was one of the first two women in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador to be appointed to cabinet. She was first elected in 1979 in the district of Humber East. Articulate and bright, she had a law degree from Dalhousie University and had worked for a short time in the Corner Brook law firm partnered by Clyde Wells. She defeated Wells in the Humber East district in the 1989 election when he led the Liberals to provincial victory.⁵ Verge served with distinction as Minister of Education and Minister of Justice in the Peckford government and was Deputy Premier during Tom Rideout's brief tenure as Premier. While in opposition, Verge was to prove her mettle. She regularly challenged Wells in the legislature, and outshone most of her colleagues on the opposition benches. When she announced her decision to seek the leadership of the PC Party, many party supporters felt she had what it would take to defeat Wells.

The leadership contest between Sullivan and Verge was a bitter affair. Verge won by only three votes. The sweetness of her victory was not to last very long, as the internal party bitterness was soon to return. The Tories were focused on defeating Clyde Wells and the Liberal Party, but they found themselves embroiled in a winter election campaign against a Liberal Party led — not by Clyde Wells, whom they were convinced they could defeat —

⁵Liberal Ed Joyce, who had been elected in nearby Bay of Islands district, resigned his seat just after being elected to give Wells an easy ride into the legislature, as the PCs, as well as the New Democrats, were unable to field a candidate and Wells won by acclamation.

but by Brian Tobin, who had taken over the reins of the Liberal Party following a quick and voluntary exit by Wells. Tobin was an accomplished parliamentarian who had honed his skills in the House of Commons, both as a member of the Liberal "Rat Pack" while in opposition, and as the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in the Jean Chrétien federal government.

Verge and the PC Party were defeated in the 1996 provincial election, losing seven of the sixteen seats they held going into the election. Verge, herself, was defeated for the first time in Humber East, losing by a seven-vote margin. Sullivan won handily in Ferryland, and as happened in the Tom Rideout-Len Simms situation, he succeeded Verge and became interim party leader.

This is the historical context of leadership within the Progressive Conservative Party for the past twenty-five years. Chapter Two narrows the focus to examine the ideological inclinations of the various factions which came together to form the provincial PC Party. The party's ideology has been shaped through accommodation and coalition building. The chapter looks briefly at the influence of those who opposed Confederation with Canada in 1949 on the ideological makeup of the modern party, as well as the other influences which have resulted in a party that gets its strengths and its weaknesses from the various coalitions which have at times either worked together or worked against each other over the twenty-five years of the modern era of the party.

Chapter Three sharpens the focus to analyse the leadership of Lynn Verge from two perspectives; the first examines the influence of the ideologically-based party factionalism on her leadership, and the other examines the influence of gender. The paper argues that the

ultimate failure of the PC Party under Lynn Verge was due to her failure to deal effectively with the factionalism which had traditionally split the party, and makes a link between the ideological differences that contributed to the party's factionalism and gender as a focus for ideology. The link is the ideological influence of feminism.

Chapter Four builds on the argument that Lynn Verge's failure as leader of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador was not only due to the reluctance of her caucus to support a woman as leader, but also to the crippling effect of the internal struggle within caucus — a symptom characteristic of political parties in opposition — a phenomenon political scientist George Perlin has called the opposition syndrome.⁶ As an opposition leader, there were limits to the power Lynn Verge had at her disposal to enable and assist her efforts to demand and receive caucus loyalty. This chapter also discusses the problems created for the caucus when, struggling with their leadership issues, they were caught off-guard by the Liberals when Premier Brian Tobin called an unexpected February election.

Chapter Five presents the conclusion. The party's ideologically-based factionalism, the gender of its leader, and the opposition syndrome, combined with a fourth characteristic of leadership that was to destroy Lynn Verge's attempts to be the first female premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. That fourth characteristic was Lynn Verge's own fatal flaw.

⁶George C. Perlin, *The Tory Syndrome: Leadership Politics in the Progressive Conservative Party* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980) pp. 197-198. Also see Mark Graesser, "Leadership Crisis in an Opposition Party: The Liberal Party of Newfoundland," in *Leaders and Parties in Canadian Politics: Experiences of the Provinces*, ed. Kenneth R. Carty, Lynda Erickson and Donald E. Blake (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada, 1992) pp. 32-52.

She did not meet the challenge of leadership quickly enough. She was much too slow in bringing her own style of leadership to the PC Party. She never did get control of the party.

1.2 Statement of Methodology and Evidence

This is an examination of why Lynn Verge did not and could not get control of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador after her election as party leader. Evidence has been gathered through a series of interviews with key informants — PC Party caucus colleagues who worked with her, and some of those who worked against her — as well as others who held key roles within the party executive and those who were consulted as paid and voluntary advisers to the leader. Attempts by the author to interview four of the major players during the period covered were unsuccessful.⁷ The list of interviews appears in the Sources section at the beginning of the thesis. All interviews but one were conducted face-to-face and were taped and transcribed. The interview with John Laschinger was conducted by telephone and was not transcribed. Notes were used from the Laschinger interview to support statements and for attribution. Text from the transcribed interviews has been included as Appendix A. The key informant portion of each of the transcripts has been included for general interest because it is original material. The interviews were not conducted with a prescribed set of

⁷Requests for interviews with PC MHAs Bill Matthews, Ed Byrne and Roger Fitzgerald, and Liberal Rick Woodford were unsuccessful. Mr. Matthews did not return telephone calls to his office. Interview times were set up with Mr. Byrne on three occasions, but he cancelled all three. Although both returned telephone calls, Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Woodford were unable to give a time commitment for an interview.

questions and questions were not transcribed.

A second source of information is my own personal observations during the period under study. I was hired by Lynn Verge to work as a media relations consultant during her leadership campaign in 1995. The next year I was hired by the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador to work as a communications consultant during the 1996 provincial election campaign.

As an insider for both the leadership campaign and the provincial election, I was part of the decision-making team and attended strategy meetings and assisted in developing and delivering campaign messages. I had full access to information within the Verge campaign team during the leadership, and full access to information within the PC Party's campaign team during the provincial election. Naturally, I did not have access to any information about the strategic thinking that went into the Sullivan campaign during the leadership. In fact, it has proven difficult to gather that information. Informants who were key players in the Sullivan campaign who had agreed to speak with me were reluctant to disclose much about the strategic thinking behind the campaign, and as noted, I was unable to interview a number of the key players from the Sullivan camp.

In the writing of this thesis it was difficult to compensate for the different levels of access to information that I was afforded during and after the leadership campaign. However, I have tried to let the words of the informants speak for themselves without any biases imposed by an insider's knowledge of events. That is one reason why I have included the verbatim comments of those interviewed. I have depended upon their accounting of events

with collaboration from others when and where possible.

2

Leadership and Ideology

2.1 A Discussion of the Role of Ideology in the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador

The Progressive Conservative (PC) Party of Newfoundland and Labrador has struggled with a factionalism that has split the party since its early beginnings following Confederation with Canada in 1949. There have been times when the party was successful in dealing with the split; other times it was not.

Factionalism refers to a division or dissension within a group, such as a political party. For the purposes of this discussion, factionalism will be viewed as an explanation of a weakness within the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, as factionalism: "connotes illegitimacy, if not malevolence and pathology . . . often to explain party weaknesses, disintegration of unity, corruption, and opportunism among party leaders . . . factions are said to produce strife, leading to stresses and strains and other disorders of a malfunctioning organization."¹

Beller and Belloni argue that the historic view of political factionalism has been used to explain party weaknesses which ultimately lead to a malfunctioning organization. This view is used to support the arguments in this paper. The PC Party of Newfoundland and

¹Dennis C. Beller and Frank P. Belloni, *Faction Politics: Political Parties and Factionalism in Comparative Perspective* (Santa Barbara, CA: Clio Press, 1978), 6.

Labrador has survived as a coalition of interests since its modern beginning in 1949. During periods of good times, when the factions within the party worked together, the party enjoyed electoral success. Electoral success bred cooperation, cooperation bred electoral success, and the glue that seemed to bind the two factions together was strong, effective leadership. When leadership was strong, the factions within the party were secondary, and instead of identifying the factions within the party in a negative way, if indeed they were identified, they would be referred to in a positive way — as coalitions. But in opposition, when the leader had little power to control caucus members, factionalism split the party even deeper into an ‘us versus them’ grouping, which most often manifested itself in open criticism of the party leader.

The factionalism within the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador is the result of a split along a left/right ideological predilection, with party members, for the most part, falling into the ranks of ‘progressives’ — those on the left of a conservative political spectrum, and ‘conservatives’ — those further to the right. Party members have long been aware of these differences, and there has been and continues to be a predilection by party elites toward a consistent view. Party members often split into different political camps (especially during leadership campaigns), and, for the most part, tend to group together with the same people. Many members of the party see nothing wrong with being labelled ‘Right’

or 'Left'.² Party members often acknowledge the difference with a view that those with the left predilection counter those with the right predilection, and vice versa, creating a balanced approach. The fiscally conservative Tories on the right have a tendency to rein in the socially conscious PCs on the left; just as the left leaning Red Tories would say they temper the business liberalism of the Conservatives.

William Christian and Colin Campbell present the position that in Canada, conservatism, as expressed by the PC Party of Canada, has a tradition and a character distinct from liberalism, as expressed by the Liberal Party of Canada, although the two national parties at times bear a close similarity to each other.³ The two provincial parties in Newfoundland and Labrador have similarities with their national counterparts. However, the roots of the Newfoundland parties are distinct from the national parties, resulting in some slight variations in ideological persuasion. This is especially true for the provincial PC Party. The initial ranks of the Newfoundland Tories included many of those who opposed Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, mainly because their political rival of the day, Joseph R. Smallwood, was a Liberal who had aligned himself with the national Liberal Party which was

²For example, John Ottenheimer: "I don't mind being called a Red Tory." (Interview, October 10, 1996). Also Loyola Sullivan: "We need some strong right-of-centre policies if we are to continue to attract votes. We've relinquished a right-wing agenda and we've gone more to the left. And that's not our ideology. I feel we have to be to the right-of-centre." (Interview October 10, 1996).

³William Christian and Colin Campbell, *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1996), 84.

in power in Ottawa. The anti-Confederates in Newfoundland had a choice after their cause had failed and a slim majority of the province voted to join Canada in 1949.

Their choice “was whether to remain a local party or to ally themselves with the national PCs. After the second referendum the diehards of the League for Responsible Government and those from the Economic Union with the United States Party met in February, 1949. ‘Out of a crew of dissidents’ the [Newfoundland and Labrador] Progressive Conservative Party was born.”⁴ United against a common foe in Smallwood, the anti-Confederates had to fit themselves into a PC ideology. There was little doubt that the influence of the strong anti-Confederate movement would be reflected in the makeup of the provincial PCs, and it is still expressed within the party’s ideology not as an anti-Canadian position — but as a pro-Newfoundland position. The link between this ‘crew of dissidents’ and the modern PC Party is a tendency by an element within the party toward a Newfoundland brand of nationalism. Although she provides no examination of the ideological underpinnings that may have led to what the modern PC Party in Newfoundland now stands for, Susan McCorquodale does provide a very detailed historical account of the troubled times for the PC Party from the early years following Confederation in 1949 into the early 1970s. She argues that their troubles stemmed mainly from their inability to convince a majority of the electorate that this coalition of anti-Confederates and business liberal Tories

⁴Susan McCorquodale, “Newfoundland Plus Ça Change, Plus C’est La Meme Chose,” in *Canadian Provincial Politics: The Party Systems of the Ten Province*, 2nd edition, ed. Martin Robin (Scarborough ON: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1978), 146.

was worthy of support. The electoral tide finally turned for the Tories under Frank Moores, when, by the slightest of margins, voters rejected Smallwood — after twenty-three years — and the PCs came out in front in a 21-20-1 split, although it took them another year to get Smallwood out of office, as he stubbornly hung on, trying to convince the Lieutenant Governor that he and the Liberals still had the right to govern.⁵

Moores' successor, Brian Peckford, drew upon his early years as a young man in rural Newfoundland to develop a version of Newfoundland nationalism that formed an integral part of the PC Party's "progressive" ideology of the early 1980s. Because Peckford's father moved around the province as a welfare officer, the Peckford family had lived in many parts of the province during young Brian's formative years and he wrote that even though he would have been quite young at the time, he was aware something significant was happening during the debates leading up to Confederation with Canada. Later he would reflect on the national angst experienced by Newfoundlanders during that period.⁶

It is likely that because of his experiences as a young man growing up in rural Newfoundland, the nationalist ideology of the PC Party under Brian Peckford was coloured by a Newfoundland brand of jingoism, particularly in the area of jurisdiction over natural

⁵See Table 1, page 2.

⁶A. Brian Peckford, *The Past In The Present: A Personal Perspective on Newfoundland's Future*. (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, 1983) "I remain of the opinion the Newfoundlanders generally had no knowledge of what was being negotiated. I'm sure very few realized that our say in fisheries matters would be small and insignificant." pp. 49-50.

resources.⁷ Yet, there is little doubt that party ideology under Peckford was one that had wide support both within the party and among the electorate.

Peckford, particularly in his first two mandates, demanded and received party loyalty. His electoral success left the Liberals in the House of Assembly in total and complete disarray and the legislature under Peckford resembled the lopsided distribution in seats that Smallwood often commanded in the years of Liberal domination.⁸

Newfoundland conservatism, as expressed by the PC Party, has shown a deep and abiding care for individualism and liberty. However, one of its major strands has been economic liberalism. Economic liberalism — or business liberalism, as Christian and Campbell call it, stresses the original concerns of liberalism to remove restraints on personal freedom, historically most often imposed by government regulation.⁹ This is the cornerstone of the group I have called the conservatives within the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Welfare liberals, on the other hand, look to the state, which they see as an effective counterweight to the large corporations and trade unions, to give substance to the formal

⁷For an examination of the "nationalistic" ideologies of Brian Peckford, see Doug House, "The Mouse that Roars: New Directions in Canadian Political Economy - the Case of Newfoundland," in *Regionalism in Canada*, ed. Robert J. Brym (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1986), pp. 131-135.

⁸Mark Graesser, "Leadership Crisis in an Opposition Party: The Liberal Party of Newfoundland," in *Leaders and Parties in Canadian Politics: Experiences of the Provinces*, ed. Kenneth R. Carty, Lynda Erickson and Donald E. Blake (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada, 1992) pp. 32-52.

⁹Christian and Campbell, 6.

liberty of all by ensuring an acceptable minimum standard of social resources by the redistribution of wealth through the taxation system and social welfare programs. Welfare liberals consider the fate of the small businessperson who cannot compete with the large monopoly, and the poor who have only the freedom to be poor. Welfare liberals also maintain that to protect the more important human rights, it is justifiable to restrict economic rights by introducing progressive taxation and extensive government intervention to regulate economic life and social programs.¹⁰ This is the aspect of welfare liberalism which contributes to the make up of what I have called the progressives within the PC Party.

It would be more than convenient if the word conservative meant only an association of ideologies within the PC Party. But the word conservative has a variety of additional meanings in ordinary speech. "It would be tempting to ignore them were it not for the fact that these alternative meanings also shed light on the phenomena we are exploring. One use of conservative is to describe those who are hostile to change, and who prefer things just as they are."¹¹ Christian and Campbell argue that this is not, in itself, a political doctrine, but a disposition which dislikes rapid changes in identity; which prefers change to be slow and cautious; which regrets any alteration in the state of affairs that threatens to destroy what is known and loved; and resists any argument that there might be an advantage gained by

¹⁰Christian and Campbell, 131.

¹¹Christian and Campbell, 132.

the change.¹² This, too, is a characteristic of the group I have called conservatives.

On the other hand, the makeup of the progressive group included a strong bent toward Newfoundland nationalism, originating from the fight against the proposal for Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada in the late 1940s, and spurred on in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Brian Peckford's strongly held belief that Newfoundland and Labrador should stand up for itself against Ottawa as well as the intrusion¹³ of international corporations in the Newfoundland and Labrador economy.

My assessment of this group, based upon Lynn Verge's speeches during the leadership campaign and the election campaign of 1996 and the policy development process which led up to the 1996 provincial election, is that they also believed fervently that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador should make their own way, with their own resources — both human and natural — and that success would be achieved through internal co-operation and inclusion.¹⁴ This was a contributing element of the group that made up the progressive faction of the PC Party.

¹²Christian and Campbell, 133.

¹³The word "intrusion" is used to express the belief that the external dependency on direct foreign investment in the Newfoundland economy, particularly in the resource sector, was a negative influence on the province's growth. See Valerie Summers, "Resource Politics and Regime Change in the Federal Era, 1949-1991," in *The Provincial State: Politics in Canada's Provinces and Territories* eds. Keith Brownsey and Michael Howlett (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992), pp. 9-30.

¹⁴Senator Gerald Ottenheimer, personal interview, October 27, 1996. "Lynn Verge shared with Brian Peckford and with other Conservatives, a realization that we in Newfoundland should, to the extent possible within a federal state, determine our own future."

The conservative faction has traditionally stayed close enough to the progressives to be able to work within the same political party, but this group differs significantly in their strongly held belief that Newfoundland and Labrador's resource-based economy should be developed with the assistance and co-operation of outside influences, and that the government of the province should be a care-taker, representing the provincial and local industrial interests in resource development while going about the business of providing the basic necessities of education, health and social services, transportation and municipal infrastructure, and passing legislation that would make it easier for business — either local or foreign — to develop the economy.¹⁵ This is another aspect of the conservative group. Lynn Verge's leadership of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador was challenged by these conservatives in the party. Conservative members, who held positions of power within the party, particularly in caucus, strongly resisted — indeed resented — the changes Verge represented. The icon or symbolism of a woman as leader unnerved the conservative element of the party.

The conservatives within the party could not accept a woman as leader, although the party had made some efforts in the 1980s to accommodate moderate feminist ideology. Elements of feminist political ideology were introduced into the mainstream of PC Party ideology by Brian Peckford when, at Verge's initiative, he introduced the Matrimonial

¹⁵Loyola Sullivan, personal interview, October 10, 1996. "I think we need to have sound, economic-based policies. I feel that job creation within small business is the main thing that's going to drive the economy, and we can only have social programs depending on how the economic sector performs, not at the expense of the business sector."

Property Act.¹⁶ He also created the province's first Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and established a Ministry Responsible for the Status of Women.

Lynn Verge was to take this addition of "feminism" within the party's ideological makeup to new heights. Through Verge, feminist ideology ascended to party leadership. The conservative majority in the caucus was unwilling or unable to support her because of that. While a majority of the caucus felt that way, party executive members were not only optimistic things could change, but felt that a woman as leader was something the party and the electorate should and could support. This conflict between the negativity of the caucus and the optimism of members of the party's newly elected executive was to prove to be devastating for Lynn Verge and the PC Party.

¹⁶Lynn Verge, personal interview, April 9, 1997. "I had been pushing for matrimonial property law reform during the leadership process and he immediately introduced a bill.

3

Leadership, Gender and Ideology

3.1 The Influence of Lynn Verge on the Ideology of the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador

Lynn Verge was just twenty-six, when, as a practising lawyer in her home town of Corner Brook, she was urged by members of the Corner Brook Council on the Status of Women to seek the nomination for the district of Humber East for the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party of Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1979 election. As a founding member of the Corner Brook Status of Women's Council, she was guaranteed the support of feminist friends and supporters who worked hard for her during the campaign, although few had much experience in elected politics. Until the emergence of Lynn Verge in public life, women never had anyone to champion the "feminist" cause at the provincial level.

Other women had been elected to the legislature,¹ but none came from or claimed to represent this new political ideology called feminism. The other women elected in the same era as Lynn Verge came from the ranks of municipal government and did not have the same kind of ideological constituency as Verge.

¹Lady Helena Squires (wife of former Newfoundland Prime Minister Sir Richard Squires) was elected to the Newfoundland legislature in 1930. Lynn Verge and Hazel Newhook — elected in 1979 — were the first women to be elected to the provincial House of Assembly after 1949 when Newfoundland joined Canada. Both Verge and Newhook were immediately appointed to cabinet by Brian Peckford. Newhook had been Mayor of Gander. Another municipal politician, Ida Reid of Twillingate was elected for the PCs in the 1985 provincial election.

No one challenged Verge for the right to represent the PC Party in the 1979 election in Humber East, and she won the nomination by acclamation. Although Lynn Verge had been a delegate at the 1979 PC leadership convention, supporting Brian Peckford, she never gave much thought to running as a candidate herself, until just before the election call in 1979. At the urging of friends, Verge made the decision to seek the nomination in Humber East. Most observers didn't give her much of a chance to win against Liberal George Colbourne, a Comer Brook businessman and brother-in-law of Clyde Wells. But she and her small group of feminist friends worked well with the old guard Tories in Humber East, brought together by campaign manager Lorne Wheeler.² This unlikely alliance won the seat, and by Verge's own admission, she won it on the coattails of leader Brian Peckford.

With her 1979 election, Lynn Verge became one of the first two women in Newfoundland to be appointed to the cabinet — Hazel Newhook as Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Lynn Verge as Minister of Education. It was not long before Lynn Verge, with her progressive ideological tendencies sharpened by her moderate feminist background, had an influence on government. Under Verge, the Department of Education introduced a number of progressive measures. The province's school curriculum was expanded at all levels to include more Newfoundland and Labrador content. The senior high school program

²Lorne Wheeler was to play a significant role in Lynn Verge's growth as a politician, as her trusted advisor throughout much of the rest of her career, as he was Deputy Minister of Education when she was the Minister. He was particularly involved as a policy advisor after the defeat of the PCs, when Wheeler was retained by the PCs when they went into Opposition. He was her first campaign manager in 1979 and also made a significant contribution to her leadership campaign in 1995.

was significantly reorganized with the introduction of Grade 12, and social advances were made by the department, such as the integration of children with disabilities into the mainstream of the school program.

Verge was appointed Minister of Justice and Attorney General in 1985. Here, too, she was to put a progressive, feminist stamp on the department, following through on Peckford's initiatives in the area of Matrimonial Property rights and introducing legislation to make it easier for divorced women to collect court-ordered maintenance payments from their former male partners. Verge was also the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

Following the resignation of Brian Peckford as Premier and party leader in 1989, Verge served as Deputy Premier in the short-lived government of Tom Rideout, who had succeeded Peckford. Rideout quickly went to the people with an election call, but the PCs lost to the Liberals.

Political analysts suggest one of the reasons Rideout lost was due to his unwillingness — or his inability — to present himself and the PC Party as different from the party led by Brian Peckford.³ Even though the PCs were ahead in public opinion polls conducted before the election call and increased that lead by six more percentage points halfway through the campaign, the lead failed to translate into a majority of seats won on election day. The PCs won forty-eight percent of the popular vote to forty-seven percent for the Liberals, but they

³John Laschinger and Geoffrey Stevens, *Leaders and Lesser Mortals: Backroom Politics in Canada* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1992), 192.

won only twenty-one seats, while the Liberals took thirty-one seats in the fifty-two-seat legislature.

How did certain victory become a humiliating defeat? John Laschinger was campaign manager for the Tories during the election and he asks in his own book: "How could a lead of twenty-six points disappear in eleven or twelve days?"⁴ Laschinger turns to the results of a number of "rolling" polls conducted by pollster Allan Gregg for the answer. Gregg, who was with Decima Research at the time, had conducted a number of polls for the Newfoundland Tories going into the 1989 election. Laschinger writes:

[T]he clues [to the PC loss] are in the first Decima poll, the one on which Rideout had made his decision to call the election. Gregg asked Newfoundlanders whether, on the one hand, they thought the Conservative government would stay much the same with Rideout replacing Peckford, or whether, on the other hand, they thought the election of Rideout would mean a new approach to government in Newfoundland. Only 40 per cent thought there would be a new approach; 56 per cent thought the government would stay the same (4 per cent had no opinion). Yet 76 per cent of the respondents had negative views of the performance of the Peckford government, rating it either fair (44 per cent) or poor (32 per cent). Probing deeper, Gregg found that 59 per cent agreed with the suggestion that the Peckford government had started off well enough 10 years earlier, but that its performance had worsened in the final couple of years.⁵

Laschinger suggests that from the information Gregg had gleaned from his initial poll in 1989 that Newfoundlanders were unhappy with the government Peckford had given them in the final few years of his administration (the specific transgression was funding of the Sprung Greenhouse, the failed hydroponics development), and they wanted a change — a different kind of government. Because Rideout was seen as being much the same as

⁴Laschinger and Stevens, 1992, 192.

⁵Laschinger and Stevens, 1992, 192.

Peckford, voters could not achieve change by voting PC. Rideout was either unwilling or unable to distance his leadership from the style and substance of Brian Peckford. Yet Peckford himself was quick to condemn Rideout's leadership for the loss:

One day after the 1989 PC defeat, ex-premier Brian Peckford (who had joined Ed Roberts as an election-night television commentator) publicly blamed the loss on ineffective leadership by his successor, Tom Rideout. In the same interview, he went on to say that "if Mr. Rideout is not able to unite the caucus and a dispirited opposition syndrome sets in, then the question of his leadership could arise. But that could be a year or more away."⁶

Clyde Wells had ended seventeen years of Tory rule in the province. Wells decided to run in his old district of Humber East against Lynn Verge, yet he lost in his bid to unseat her. Wells was elected in a by-election shortly after, running unopposed in the neighboring district of Bay of Islands. For Verge, her defeat of Wells in Humber East was to remain a lasting legacy in her bid for the leadership of the PC Party. Her opposition stint also gave her more ammunition for her leadership aspirations, through her high profile critic responsibilities of justice, the constitution, and the office of the Premier. She was also able to make points in her lesser roles as critic for culture, the status of women, and intergovernmental affairs. She was extremely vocal inside the legislature against many of the initiatives of the Liberal government, including their plan to privatize Newfoundland Hydro.

⁶Mark Graesser, "Leadership Crisis in an Opposition Party: The Liberal Party of Newfoundland," in *Leaders and Parties in Canadian Politics: Experiences of the Provinces*, ed. Kenneth R. Carty, Lynda Erickson and Donald E. Blake (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Canada, 1992), 48. The Peckford quote is from *The Evening Telegram*, St. John's, NF, April 22, 1989.

During his tenure as premier, Wells was a strong, iron-willed, leader. He was frequently accused of running a one-man show. Most often his accuser was Lynn Verge, the lone woman on the Opposition benches and an accomplished debater. Verge gained a well-deserved reputation — particularly for irritating Wells — and she shone in opposition while many of her caucus colleagues slipped into obscurity. It was as if Wells could never forget his loss to Verge in Humber East in 1989. The public seemed convinced that Verge and Wells had some kind of private grudge against each other, with Verge more than willing to stand alone against him and quite often irritating him.⁷ However, Verge denies any personal motivation, insisting their frequent sparring was merely part of the thrust of parliamentary debate.⁸ One incident stands out as an example of how Wells would, at times, put himself in an awkward position simply by refusing to acquiesce to a request from Verge. In a private member's motion tabled December 5, 1990, Verge asked the legislature to observe a minute of silence as a gesture to remember the fourteen young women who were murdered by Marc Lépin at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal. It was a simple request that would not have detracted from the business of the legislature, however, Wells had his Government House Leader, Winston Baker, refuse saying it would be disruptive. A more obvious observation, however, might be that Wells did so to spite Verge.

Many PC supporters thus ranked Verge highly when John Laschinger conducted an

⁷ "Without Wells to kick around, Verge has lost her biggest political asset." Editorial, *The Evening Telegram* (St. John's, NF) January 24, 1996, 4.

⁸ Lynn Verge, personal interview, April 9, 1996.

internal party poll in late 1994 for Verge when she was considering running for the leadership.⁹ Party members gave her a high approval rating for the most part because of her performance in the House of Assembly. Her challenge would be to improve on this kind of performance once she had won the leadership of the party.

The interesting twist for Verge was that when Laschinger set about planning her leadership campaign, he not only built on her reputation as one of the more vocal members of the Opposition, but also — like Rideout — her close association with Peckford and her own success during his terms as Premier and her work in the Education and Justice portfolios.

Leadership conventions usually provide delegates with opportunities to assess the leadership candidates on important issues of policy and party direction.¹⁰ Laschinger knew that the delegates to the PC Party's convention in 1995 would have no such opportunity to help them differentiate between the two candidates from the perspective of policy, for if Lynn Verge and Loyola Sullivan, the only two contenders, differed on policy, these differences remained largely unarticulated because the party never provided a forum through which the two could debate issues or highlight different policy directions. Verge's commitment to the party was "to hold the loyalty of the wonderful people who've supported the party through thick and thin, but we've also got to reach out and welcome other people with ideas — good

⁹John Laschinger, personal interview, August 17, 1996.

¹⁰R.M. Punnett, *Selecting the Party Leader: Britain in Comparative Perspective* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 103.

ideas, and energy and enthusiasm."¹¹ Sullivan built his platform on promising "sound economic direction for the province."¹²

Other than oblique references to ideological underpinnings in speeches, neither candidate made anything of their ideological roots during the leadership campaign. In fact, neither candidate produced a policy document or information brochure during the entire campaign. The rank and file party faithful were left to decide the contest on personality, past political record, and their own sense of who they would be most comfortable with as their leader. When party members made the decision about which of the two candidates they would support, they split along traditional lines, as many of the people who supported and worked for Lynn Verge were the same people who had supported and worked for Tom Rideout in 1989 and for Brian Peckford in 1979. Loyola Sullivan's core workers came from the same ranks as those who had supported Len Simms in 1989 and those who had thrown their support behind Bill Doody in 1979. This was more than a coincidence. The split in support was ideologically based and followed the split between the progressives (Verge, Rideout and Peckford) and the conservatives (Sullivan, Simms and Doody).

While Lynn Verge downplays the influence of ideology in the choices she and her supporters made concerning policy development for her leadership platform, she does agree there have been differences based on preferences exhibited by party members that carried

¹¹Lynn Verge, Interview with CBC Television News, CBNT St. John's, 14 Feb. 1995.

¹²Loyola Sullivan, personal interview, October 10, 1996.

through all three party leadership conventions of the modern party from 1979 to 1995.¹³ The argument is that this predilection was ideologically based and the traditional split between progressives and conservatives occurred over time.

Senator Gerald Ottenheimer was among Lynn Verge's staunchest supporters, and provided insight into how the ideologically-based cleavages within the party have been formed and how they influenced the modern party in 1995-96. Senator Ottenheimer had a long history within the Newfoundland and Labrador PC Party, serving as party leader and Opposition Leader during part of the Smallwood era. As a respected Senator, he had often provided the provincial party with timely reminders of its roots. Sources also indicated that "the Senator," as he was referred to by party insiders, was one of the few party influentials who stood firmly against the internal bickering that was working to undermine Lynn Verge's leadership.¹⁴ When asked directly if he had intervened, Senator Ottenheimer said he didn't want to speak publicly about the party's internal squabbles. He did say that he had continued to support Verge throughout her leadership.

I supported Lynn Verge in the leadership convention, have a very high regard for her, know her very well and served in cabinet with her. Her leadership was typified by a deep social concern and a recognition that these social matters could only be handled within a policy of fiscal responsibility. Newfoundland, irrespective of political parties, is in some ways a very small-c conservative society. That may well have been an element that worked against her as a woman leader. Also being a small-c conservative, or traditional society, perhaps people are more used to a style of leadership which is more 'macho' in the sense of aggression, verbal aggression. It may

¹³Verge.

¹⁴Kathy Dunderdale, personal interview, September 12, 1996; and Calvin Powell, personal interview, October 26, 1996.

have been also that certain traditional values, frequently felt rather than articulated, more perhaps subjective rather than objective; that these may have been at work—and may still be at work, not only in Newfoundland society, but in that element of the Newfoundland society that makes up the PC Party¹⁵.

The PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, according to Senator Ottenheimer, is based on a coalition of interests. When the PC Party has won support to form a government, it usually means that the coalition has been renewed and the coalition has worked.¹⁶ While it may be difficult to identify all the aspects of the coalition, Ottenheimer suggested some of the aspects are the small-c conservatives who feel more comfortable with the overall approach or intellectual framework of the party. Then there would be people who put greater emphasis on the value of individual liberties, individual freedoms, individual choices, the right of people to be what they are, who are apprehensive of government intrusions into areas where government is not necessary, and people who, without necessarily articulating it, support subsidiarity — the principle that the organisation best suited to fulfil a function is that organisation or level of government which is closest to the problem. Senator Ottenheimer said that subsidiarity helps describe the relationship between decentralization and a sharing of power. Ottenheimer, in describing what I have suggested would make up another aspect of the 'progressive' element of the party, said that people are more 'progressive' rather than 'conservative' if they support the concept of subsidiarity — believing what can be done by

¹⁵Senator Gerald Ottenheimer, personal interview, October 27, 1996.

¹⁶Senator Ottenheimer. The analysis which follows this quote summarizes Ottenheimer's views expressed through the interview.

a community, should be done by a community, and what can best be done by a provincial order of government is best done there and only those things which a federal order of government is required to do, should, in fact, be done at that level. Ottenheimer said that there are also the people who take a historic or generational view of politics, who are aware of responsibilities in terms of future generations. Electing a government is, he said, like a form of trust that the living set up for the yet to come. This is another element of the 'progressives' within the party, and it is these people who place a stronger emphasis on provincial identity.

Senator Ottenheimer said that he viewed the PC Party in Newfoundland and Labrador from a number of perspectives, taking the premise that there is a reasonably coherent and consistent perspective, or framework of values, which typifies the party, and which has been fairly constant for the past twenty years. He said that there is also a need to counter-balance that framework of values by the requirement for the PC Party — and every party — to update its approach in specific areas to make sure that the party's policies are contemporary and relevant to the problems of the day. The ongoing need for parties to analyze their policies to ensure they are relevant should be a continuing phenomenon, he said, suggesting that previously it could have been done over a number of years. But, in today's politics the rate of change is increasing and parties are having difficulty coping with that rate of change. So, he suggested, on the one hand there is a consistent, coherent, identifiable core of values and approaches to socio-political issues which typifies a political party — which he calls an intellectual frame of reference — and the process of making that intellectual frame of

reference specific in terms of particular issues has to be constantly revised. But Ottenheimer also maintained that political parties and political leaders, even while recognizing the need to change, should also be cognizant of the need to stay true to certain values that define the party.

You can adapt to specific things without having to change your fundamental political values. Lynn Verge shared with Brian Peckford, and with other Conservatives, a realization that we in Newfoundland should, to the extent possible within a federal state, determine our own future. That doesn't make us less Canadians, it isn't a negative, it isn't anti-Canadian. It's pro-Newfoundland. And also that the federal government should not intrude in matters which are very local and specific to the Newfoundland character. I would say that that has been a sort of continuing stream within the Conservative Party. Then there are others [within the party] who, while not necessarily denying those principles, attach less importance to them.¹⁷

Senator Ottenheimer resisted the temptation to pigeon hole Lynn Verge's ideology, but he did suggest she fit the nationalistic bent of Brian Peckford so well that it would appear she was cut from the same bolt of cloth as Peckford.¹⁸ Ottenheimer also raised the spectre of the anti-Confederate roots of the PC Party, and as would be expected from the progressive ranks, turned the nationalistic sentiment around to a more positive, pro-Newfoundland position. Much of Lynn Verge's politics was influenced by her pro-Newfoundland position, according to Senator Ottenheimer.

There is also the strong welfare liberal element of her background, which includes her association with the feminist movement of the province and the nation, and her support for

¹⁷Senator Ottenheimer.

¹⁸Senator Ottenheimer.

the arts and cultural community. A close association can be made with Verge and the progressive legislation she introduced when she was Minister of Education and when she was Minister of Justice and Attorney General. While Lynn Verge may have been a PC, she was definitely to the left on the conservative political spectrum. She seemed to go to unusual ends to disassociate herself from the drab, conservative, tory demeanour that is at times given to the PC Party. In fact, both in the written and spoken word, Verge disliked the term "Tory," and was very insistent that her speech writers and media relations people never refer to the party as "the Tory party," or to party members as "Tories" in her speaking notes and news releases. She also disliked using the terms "Conservatives," and "Progressive Conservatives." She always insisted on her preference, which was "the PC Party," or "PCs." She said that she was never comfortable with the "conservative" label. Perhaps this was an ideologically-based quirk.

Because membership in the PC Party is so loose, ideological labels are applied not to the rank and file of the PC Party, but to the party elites and those who have, over time, remained to wield power within the caucus and the backrooms of the party.

There is actually no formal membership in the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. Some district associations have in the past charged a nominal fee for membership such as \$2.00 or \$5.00 and issued membership cards, but this is not required by the party's constitution and, when implemented, was used mostly for fund-raising purposes. While this non-structured arrangement may give the appearance of openness and accessibility, it is, in fact, an impediment to carrying on internal party business. Informal networks based on

friendship, kinship, community and neighbourhoods may work within local district associations, but the lack of a formal membership structure has hindered the party's ability to build and maintain a strong membership network throughout the province. A more damaging element of this lack of membership structure was seen time and time again during the delegate selection process leading up to the 1995 leadership convention, as the two competing candidate camps tried to recruit the PC faithful in the fifty-two districts across the province.

The search for delegates went well beyond the bounds of those who were traditionally politically aligned to the PC Party. From some districts there were reports that the Sullivan camp fell to recruiting well-known local Liberals and supporters from the ranks of local community groups and service clubs, such as the Kinsmen,¹⁹ to run as delegates or to vote at the delegate selection meetings. The PC Party also opens its party membership during internal political processes, such as leadership conventions, candidate selection and delegate selection meetings, to persons as young as 14. It may be argued that the intent, which is to open the political process to young people, is laudable. But, the reality is that many of these people become "instant Tories" or "tiny Tories," and have no real affiliation with the party or its internal processes. However, people this young are especially susceptible to manipulation by adult strategists, who use the young people as cheerleaders and "go-fors" during party events, or — an even more sinister utility — cajole or bribe the young

¹⁹Both Loyola Sullivan and former party leader Len Simms were national presidents of the Kinsmen Clubs of Canada and had extensive networks within this service club organization throughout the province.

people into voting for their chosen candidate or delegate slate. This manipulation of young people by strategists working for Loyola Sullivan was the contributing factor in a decision by the party to overturn the results of a delegate selection meeting held on Fogo Island leading up to the 1995 convention. This event is detailed in Appendix B: The Fogo Island Incident.

The 1995 leadership convention of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador was decided, not on ideas, but on personality and form. The preoccupation of the leadership teams was with the bitter infighting over delegate selection, not the development of candidate or party policy. The 1995 PC leadership convention was very typical of the modern leadership selection process under stress. Heather MacIvor suggests “there are many things that go wrong at leadership conventions and there are many things that are wrong with them.”²⁰ The criticisms cited by MacIvor include the extraordinary amount of money involved in running a long leadership campaign (and the PC leadership campaign was extremely long — almost four months), abuse of delegate selection and voting rules, and the high costs to delegates. These all threaten the viability of leadership conventions, and even though some abuses are illegitimate, some are deemed legitimate.

A legitimate abuse of the delegate selection process which plagued the PC leadership of 1995 was the use of candidate ‘slates.’ Each of the fifty-two PC Party district associations

²⁰Heather MacIvor, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1996), 14.

was permitted to send eleven delegates to the convention.²¹ These slates consisted of eleven names for each of the eleven delegate positions from the district association. Every person who voted in the delegate selection meeting was encouraged to vote for the entire slate for that one particular leadership candidate. During the 1995 leadership race, all but two delegate selection meetings were contested through slating, which led both sides to employ some unusual tactics. Two of the district associations which were in place before the call of the leadership convention, had organized and elected their executives before the bitterness between the two campaigns soured the delegate selection process. For example, in St. John's North, the entire five-person executive decided to support Verge, as did the six delegates at-large who were elected to attend the convention. All this took place without any input from the party members who supported Loyola Sullivan. Unfortunately for Sullivan, the St. John's North selection meeting was the first to be covered by a reporter from *The St. John's Evening Telegram*. The story trumpeting Verge's success was published the next day on the paper's front-page.²² That public perception was to set the tone for the next two months, as Sullivan felt he was being pushed into a numbers game, and claimed he was getting many more delegates than Verge as the delegate selection process moved along. In an interview with

²¹A district association's eleven delegates to the convention consisted of the five-person executive, as well as six others elected specifically to be delegates at the leadership convention. Very few district associations actually had duly-elected executives at the time of the convention call — which indicates the lack of organization the PC Party was experiencing across the province at the time.

²²Craig Jackson, "Verge Wins First Round," *The Evening Telegram* (St. John's, NF), February 2, 1995, 1.

CBC Television early in the campaign, Sullivan said he was "confident that we are a good two-to-one in delegate selections supporting me."²³ Verge maintained throughout the campaign that the results of the overall selection process were very close, as both sides seemed to be winning as many as they were losing. The ballot at the convention, with Verge winning by only three votes, showed her interpretation to be more accurate. Following the convention, Sullivan blamed the news media for twisting his words by continually suggesting throughout the campaign that he was saying he was ahead two-to-one. He claimed he had stopped saying this himself, and it was the media which perpetuated the "myth" that he was extremely far ahead.²⁴ This twist in logic from Loyola Sullivan was a public peek at the kinds of tactics employed by his campaign workers that were often kept from the public. Three such tactics are detailed in Appendix B.

Verge supporters were concerned about the bitterness of the rivalry, and they were appalled by what they regarded as the dirty tactics and dirty tricks from the Sullivan side.

Where all this anger and bitterness came from, I've never been able to fathom. No one is ever happy when they lose, but how were these people able to keep that anger going for a year?—and what did we do that got them so damn mad? Everything that I saw, every delegate selection meeting that I was involved in, there was nothing that we did that was untoward, everything was above the board. I can't say the same thing for them. I'm afraid that the simple answer is that we elected a woman.²⁵

A more complex answer is that the major factionally-based conflict within the party

²³"Here and Now," CBC Television News, CBNT St. John's, Feb. 14, 1995.

²⁴"Here and Now," CBC Television News, CBNT St. John's, March 28, 1995.

²⁵Kathy Dunderdale, personal interview, September 12, 1996.

explains the willingness by individuals who held a different ideological view than Lynn Verge and her team to work against her and to use any kind of manipulative tactic or dirty trick they could muster to undermine her. The suggestion from Kathy Dunderdale, who co-chaired the campaign team supporting Verge's leadership bid, was that an element of the party could not and would not accept the election of a woman as party leader. Dunderdale said she and Verge were aware that they were breaking new ground by offering a woman as leader of the party. But Dunderdale said her own experience may have made her think a little differently about the process than Lynn Verge did.

I knew that this was an old boys' club and we had some really strong sexist attitudes and views towards women that I wasn't particularly comfortable with. I knew that even in the slightest way, it was about changing attitudes, and attitudes needed to be changed, even in the way I conducted myself when I was around them. What struck me about Lynn becoming leader was that this was all going to become easier. That we could relax a little more. That a standard was going to be set that people were going to have to try to aspire to in a public way, if not in a private way, which would have made life easier. It's all very naive now when I look back on it.²⁶

There was a reason Dunderdale suggested that this kind of thinking was too simplistic and naive. She said while the party may have wanted to portray itself as an open, clear-thinking political organization that provided equal opportunities to women as well as men, the reality of what transpired as the delegate selection process unfolded was a reflection of anything but openness. She cited one example of the PC Association on the campus of Memorial University.

[At the] MUN PC Club, we saw young, educated men, who were supporting Loyola

²⁶Dunderdale.

Sullivan, who were downright abusive to delegates, especially female delegates. We cannot ignore the influence this must have had on young people, particularly young women. We had delegates from Memorial University who were third and fourth year Women's Studies majors, and they're having a look at this and they're saying "No, definitely not, I'm in the wrong place. I just don't fit here." I think we turned off more young people in that process.²⁷

Dunderdale said she still has difficulty dealing with those people, and thinking about it still offends her. She said that if one does not believe in the equality of people and if one does not have a fundamental respect for people regardless of gender, these are indicative of deeper concerns, because, she maintains, rarely do individuals have just a single prejudice. She said it becomes very difficult for a prejudiced person to be fair at other levels. The prejudice that she was experiencing was factionally-based. The 'us versus them' mindset had taken over the party. The coalition was not working and, in fact, was tearing the party apart.

For, not only was Lynn Verge a woman with a feminist background, she was an ideological nationalist and a welfare liberal, uncompromising in the equity she wanted for Newfoundland and Labrador society. She was in clear conflict with the faction within the party which clung to economic liberalism and toryism, particularly the aggressive business liberals, who have shown a considerable impatience with the demands of ideological compromise and collaboration requested by the progressives under Verge.

By the 1995 convention, the factions had been fighting bitterly during the leadership campaign and had stopped cooperating with each other. The media began referring to the PC leadership race with unflattering nicknames — the "food fight," and the "chicken wars"

²⁷Dunderdale.

— because of various methods used by the two camps to entice voters to the delegate selection meetings. The bitter leadership contest of 1995 between Lynn Verge and Loyola Sullivan had made the underlying problem of party factionalism much worse for the PC Party. The two-person contest was split along factional and ideological lines. Disgruntled caucus members, representing the more conservative element of the party, openly challenged their leader. As opposition leader, Lynn Verge had no mechanism at her disposal to demand party loyalty, other than her narrow, albeit legitimate, win at the convention. Her detractors denied her the legitimacy of that win. The leadership contest, with only two candidates, split the party caucus and party members into two distinct camps — with Sullivan and his supporters representing the right, and Verge and her supporters on the left. The factions worked against each other with such a fury that caucus member Jack Byrne, in the midst of the leadership campaign, said he “thought the election against the Liberals would be the war and this (the leadership race) would be a small battle — but this is the war.”²⁸

The internal party bickering that followed Lynn Verge’s win at the 1995 convention was kept within the ranks of the caucus and party executive and for six months it remained on the inside and never became public. This started to change by late October and early November of 1995. CBC Radio’s *The Morning Show* carried extensive “insider” information about troubles within the party. The radio program did not report any anti-Verge hysteria, but there were quiet mumblings from unnamed caucus members.²⁹ Then the

²⁸Jack Byrne, personal interview, October 26, 1996.

²⁹CBC Radio, “*The Morning Show*,” November 4, 1995.

mumblings grew louder and clearer in early December when a public opinion poll indicated that support for the Tories had dropped sharply. The Corporate Research poll, released November 28, 1995, showed that more than half (fifty-five percent) of decided voters indicated they would vote Liberal (up eight percentage points from polling results in August), while support for the PCs fell to thirty-two percent (down five percent).³⁰ The Tory dilemma was exacerbated by the sudden resignation of Premier Clyde Wells just before Christmas, 1995. The “coronation” of Brian Tobin as Liberal leader came even faster in early January. Trying to refocus on a new, and unexpected, opponent leading the Liberal Party, Tory caucus members and possible candidates had to make a decision when Brian Tobin called a surprise, snap election for February 26, 1996 — the middle of Newfoundland’s often bitter winter — they would have to either sink or swim with Lynn Verge.

Not everyone jumped into the Tory pool. Rick Woodford, a caucus member who had supported Verge’s leadership, “crossed the floor” and ran as a Liberal. Other PC candidates were reluctant to work with the new leader on the campaign. And while some were reluctant to work with her, others felt they had good reason to actually work against their leader.

Their argument was that she had failed to provide coherent leadership during the school reform debates of the late summer of 1995 leading up to a provincial referendum in

³⁰Keith Neuman and Don Mills, “Satisfaction With the Wells Government Remains Stable, But Liberals Widen Lead in Voter Support” (Halifax, N.S.: news release issued by Corporate Research Associates, November 28, 1995, photocopied). The survey of 400 voters in Newfoundland and Labrador was conducted November 7 to 16, 1995 as part of the Omnibus survey of Atlantic Canadians.

September, and they said she was slow to put a cohesive leadership team in place.³¹ But caucus members suggested that her worst downfall was her ineffectiveness and her inability to deal with the problems within the party. Although Verge was urged by supporters and caucus outsiders to deal with these problems which stemmed from the traditional factionalism which had split the party, she was unable to do so. If the party had been able to confront and deal with its factionalism, it likely could have mounted a much more cohesive election campaign. But, unfortunately for Verge and the PC Party, it was not in the interests of those who opposed her to cooperate. They had been planning to oust her, but the election call snubbed their plans.

³¹ Alvin Hewlett, personal interview, October 26, 1997; Harvey Hodder, personal interview, October 14, 1997.

4

Leadership Won and Lost

4.1 An Analysis of the Events that Led to the Defeat of Lynn Verge

When Lynn Verge was elected leader of the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party of Newfoundland and Labrador on April 29, 1995, she declared in her acceptance speech that nothing was going to stop the PC Party from forming the next government. Yet 302 days later, she and her party suffered a crushing defeat, losing seven of the sixteen seats they held going into the February 22, 1996 provincial election — including Verge's own district of Humber East which she had held for seventeen years.

John Laschinger, campaign manager for the 1996 PC election campaign, found the Tories fifty points behind the Liberals in his own polling at the beginning of the campaign.¹ Laschinger feared that the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberals could match the New Brunswick Liberal Party under Frank McKenna when McKenna's Liberals won all fifty-eight seats in the New Brunswick legislature in their October 13, 1987 provincial election, taking sixty percent of the popular vote. The fact that the Newfoundland PCs were able to close the gap to within fourteen percentage points in the popular vote on election day was, according to Laschinger, due completely to the work of Verge. He said Liberal insiders admitted to him after the February 22 election that if the campaign had gone on another week the PCs could

¹John Laschinger, personal interview, August 17, 1996.

have won the popular vote.² The problem, according to Laschinger, was that the provincial Tories had too much ground to make up. Their internal bickering and infighting had left them in disarray. The provincial PCs, mired in opposition for almost ten years, were vulnerable to internal conflict, as outlined by George Perlin in the theory he has labelled the Opposition Party Syndrome.³ Perlin explains that because of the party's exclusion from office its members tend to interact in internal party politics on the basis of motives that make conflict difficult to resolve. Because conflicts recur frequently and the party is subject to manifest or latent factionalism, it is unable to achieve optimum organizational effectiveness and, in turn, projects an image of internal instability which undermines public confidence in its ability to govern. Thus, electoral defeats contribute to conflict in the party and conflict in the party contributes to electoral defeat.⁴ Not only was Lynn Verge, as leader, unable to quell the internal conflict within the PC caucus and address the factionalism which existed within the party, she had trouble acknowledging that the split was open even wider than usual over the issue of her leadership. She did know that her gender was causing trouble for some members of caucus. But she did not see the connection between that and the ideologically-based factionalism that had split the PC Party. Lynn Verge knew the party, particularly the caucus, was divided over her leadership because she was a woman, but she thought she could

²Laschinger.

³George C. Perlin, *The Tory Syndrome: Leadership Politics in the Progressive Conservative Party* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), 198.

⁴Perlin, 1980, 199.

overcome those doubts and deal with them openly. What she did not realize was that some members of the conservative, male dominated caucus would conspire against her behind her back and not deal with the issue openly. Verge believed that the internal party intrigue played a significant role in the defeat of the party in the 1996 provincial election.

A woman leader and potentially a woman premier was a new and different hurdle that was more than a considerable number of people could surmount. I choose to take a positive interpretation of it. And I do still believe that the potential was there, despite the intrigue which was there within the party, and even with the unconscious reluctance or deliberate prejudice of people within the party that it could have happened, that I could have led the PCs to victory.⁵

The references to an “unconscious reluctance” and a “deliberate prejudice” indicate that Lynn Verge was aware of the cleavage within the party. Even so, she did not put much credence in the argument that the party was split along ideological lines. Was she right? What Lynn Verge believed was that there was a continuation of what she called “camps” — informal groupings of individuals within the party who worked together and supported like-minded candidates during the three leadership conventions of the modern era of the party.⁶ However, there was more at play within the 1995 version of the PC Party than the Verge explanation that this was simply a continuation of camps. These informal groupings of party elites had a strong ideological element, based upon the traditional factionalism that has existed in the party since 1949. This is supported by Senator Gerald Ottenheimer’s assessment of the roots of the party.

⁵Lynn Verge, personal interview, April 9, 1997.

⁶Verge.

The [Progressive] Conservative Party is certainly based on a coalition of interests. It is difficult to identify all the aspects of the coalition, but some of them are the small c-conservatives, and [other aspects are the] many people who put great[er] emphasis on the value of individual liberties, individual freedoms, individual choices, [and] the right of people to be what they are. . .⁷

The split along factional lines was much more pronounced in 1995. Lynn Verge recognized that there was certainly some plotting going on behind her back while she was leader. However, she admitted that her immediate assessment of the situation fell short of what was actually happening.

At the time I did not put much stock into the ability of these people to successfully conspire against me . . . Undoubtedly there was a lot going on that I didn't witness and that I might not have guessed was happening. The term 'conspiracy' suggests to me something planned, deliberate and co-ordinated. From what I've observed over the years, most people aren't industrious enough or bright enough to do the organization.⁸

Lynn Verge was to discover that not only was there a conspiracy against her which unfolded in the autumn of 1995, but that this would have a negative influence on the ability of the party to mount a successful election campaign in early 1996. The opposition party syndrome was in high gear within the ranks of the PC caucus in late 1995.

Another aspect of Perlin's opposition party syndrome which has relevance for the Newfoundland and Labrador PCs is the assessment that opposition parties have trouble attracting 'new blood' to activist roles. While Verge may have been able to attract new blood, some members of caucus mounted considerable resistance to the inclusion of the kinds of

⁷Senator Ottenheimer, personal interview, October 27, 1996.

⁸Verge.

people Lynn Verge, as leader, was attracting to the party.

Verge had seen to it that more women were being invited to contribute to the policy making process. People like Dr. Alice Collins, who had never been involved in a public way with the party before Verge's leadership bid, but who had provided a great deal of support and encouragement for Lynn Verge leading up to the convention, had been asked in mid-1995 to play a key role in the development of party policy. Verge had maintained since the beginning of the leadership campaign that in order for the PCs to win the government, they would have to expand their constituency by attracting a different and wider base of support.

Attempts to include these new people were resisted by influential members of the PC caucus by October of 1995, and this resistance widened the split within the caucus.

So while Lynn Verge had become the leader, there was also an attempt by that group to put 'their people' in place at the executive level as well. That only added to the sense of isolation and the sense of frustration within the party.⁹

The mounting resistance to her attempts to introduce a more moderate element to the party that favoured her progressive and nationalist views denied Verge the opportunity to lead the party in a new direction. Verge did not inspire confidence within her all-male caucus, mainly because the fifteen men, including all of the nine who had supported Loyola Sullivan, and at least two¹⁰ of the five who had supported her in the leadership, were resistant to Verge's new direction and her attempts to include new people in the decision-making process,

⁹Harvey Hodder, personal interview, October 14, 1997.

¹⁰Alvin Hewlett and Rick Woodford.

and more inclined toward the second, more conservative, view of the party; the view articulated by Sullivan.

A lot of caucus agree with my view. Even before the leadership, the majority of caucus members saw my views as being more representative of our party and represented more of an opportunity for our party, over the long-term, to get back [in government]. I think I represented more of what the party is and where the party has to go. Some of the people who supported her have since indicated to me that in retrospect she did not articulate the certain basic philosophies that the PC Party has traditionally stood for. Lynn Verge's vision of the party was perceived as being all over the place.¹¹

Verge also faced growing criticism within the caucus concerning her apparent inability to show leadership. Caucus members complained that while they were looking for some sign of how she would lead the party, very shortly after she had won the leadership she closeted herself away in her office with the door closed and rarely met with the caucus.

She became leader in May and we were without a staff, she didn't make decisions. . . . What she did was she came in and closeted herself for lengthy periods of time in her office with her door closed. Those of us who were representative of the other side were strangers in our own household. I'm sure we felt more like strangers than she intended for us to be strangers.¹²

Verge's slowness at putting together a team was perhaps the result of the loss of her closest internal adviser, Lorne Wheeler, who had retired as Policy Advisor to the Opposition just before she was elected leader. Wheeler was extremely good in his dealings with disgruntled caucus members and often helped smooth ruffled feathers.

It was a terrible loss that Lorne retired before I became leader, although he still

¹¹Loyola Sullivan, personal interview, October 10, 1996.

¹²Harvey Hodder, personal interview, October 14, 1997.

contributed. He was basically only a phone call away and any time I asked him to come and meet with me face-to-face or any time I asked him to come and chat with the caucus as a group or individual members, he didn't hesitate. But not having him in the office daily was a terrible loss.¹³

Without Wheeler to confide in and with her caucus growing more disgruntled by the day it took only about six months before the caucus began plotting against their leader. Resistance to Verge's leadership style was growing. By October of 1995 the resistance to Lynn Verge's feminism and the perceptions of how a feminist leader would reshape the character of the PC Party was being articulated by a majority of caucus — a character that had the potential to become an entrenched ideology that could give moderate feminists a niche they could identify with and where they could find support for feminist ideas and policies. As caucus supporter Jack Byrne suggested, there was a very difficult task waiting for Lynn Verge when she won the party leadership, and that difficulty was to stay with her right through to the provincial election campaign.

There are people who never accepted her win within the party. . . There were a number of reasons, but the predominant [one] was that some of these people — and it was prevalent during the election — just could not accept a woman as leader.¹⁴

John Laschinger also supports this contention that the nine members of caucus who opposed her bid for the leadership refused to co-operate with their leader because they could not accept a woman as leader of the party. If Verge had been premier, according to Laschinger, she would have had more power and influence with which to bring the rebellious

¹³Lynn Verge, personal interview, April, 9, 1997.

¹⁴Jack Byrne, personal interview, October 26, 1996.

caucus members into line: "She could have removed them from cabinet or taken away other perks and privileges that the premier of the province would have had control over."¹⁵ But as leader of the opposition, she had no such power. Laschinger said that when he conducted a number of focus group sessions with randomly selected voters while Verge was leader, he found that when he asked questions such as who has the best economic plan for the province, or who has the best plan to deal with social policy, the Liberals were consistently twenty to thirty points ahead of the PCs. Yet, he pointed out, at the same time, polling indicated that Verge was consistently close to and, at a number of points ahead of, Premier Clyde Wells in people's estimation of who would make the best leader for the province. "So, in fact," said Laschinger, "the party was dragging her down."¹⁶

What was happening within the ranks of the male-dominated political elite of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador was typical of other jurisdictions in western democracies.¹⁷ The male elites believed a woman as leader would hurt the party's electoral chances.

The real problem for Lynn Verge was not an aversion by voters to vote for women;

¹⁵Laschinger.

¹⁶Laschinger.

¹⁷See, for example, Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines: Women and Party Politics in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) or Sandra Baxter, and Marjorie Lansing, *Women and Politics: The Visible Majority* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983) or Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris, eds., *Gender and Party Politics* (London: Sage Publications, 1993) or Heather MacIvor, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Peterborough, ON.: Broadview Press, 1996).

her problem — and it has been and will continue to be a problem for other female leaders — is the aversion of male party elites to accept women as legitimate leaders. "Party power brokers believe that a woman in a non-traditional position will alienate voters, even where there is no proof this is true."¹⁸

A majority of the male caucus members had a problem accepting Verge's leadership because of the inter-relationship between leadership and authority and authority and legitimacy.

[L]eadership has the characteristic of inherent authority. Thus leadership is more than simply having influence or power, or being able to bring someone to do what you want him to do, regardless of his intentions or desires. Leadership involves authority and authority implies legitimacy.¹⁹

The majority of caucus, despite Verge's win at the convention, denied her the legitimacy of the position of leader. This led to a breakdown in communication between the party and the electorate, particularly on matters of policy. The influence of this inability within the PC Party to communicate its policies was to prove crippling for Verge. She was unable to do anything about it because of the stubborn resistance mounted by caucus members. Even though Verge had won the support of the majority of the party, and enjoyed the support of the new party executive, the caucus remained uncooperative.²⁰ In fact, Verge found herself having to deal with the executive of the party in isolation, and had to make her

¹⁸Tom Brook, *Getting Elected in Canada* (Stratford, ON: Mercury, 1991), 81.

¹⁹William A. Welsh, *Leaders and Elites* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), 18.

²⁰Calvin Powell, personal interview, October 26, 1996.

own efforts to include party president Calvin Powell in the decision-making process. While Powell was appreciative of the efforts made by Verge, he knew that the resistance mounted by caucus would ultimately seriously hurt the party.

[The party executive] has as much right to determine the direction of this party as those people who are elected by the people in their districts, because we, ourselves, are elected by the party, and we have to espouse the views of the party. And, with the guidance of the elected caucus and with the resources of the fifth floor²¹ we could work together. This is the way we wanted to help develop the party's position on health care, education and so forth.²²

Powell said that he had asked that executive members be included in caucus meetings and was told by caucus that it was just not the right thing to do. He said that while he believed the decision was another example of the us-versus-them mentality that dominated the caucus, it had the result of creating another division within the party and it was "very clear that the caucus wanted to remain in control of decision-making."²³ Powell contended that the refusal by caucus was another example of the growing rift between the Verge supporters, who had taken many of the executive positions in the election immediately following the leadership convention, and the caucus, the majority of whom had worked against Verge. Powell said that he and Verge continued to communicate, and that he would try to bring her the views of the executive. But when Verge left the leader's position following the 1996 election defeat, communication between the party executive and the caucus was practically non-

²¹The PC Opposition offices, including the MHA's offices, secretarial, research and public relations staff, are located on the fifth floor of Confederation Building in St. John's.

²²Powell.

²³Powell.

existent. Powell said that in the seven-month period between the departure of Verge from the party leadership and the end of his own term as party president in October, 1996, "the truth of the matter is that the executive has gone one way in terms of trying to do something about this and the fifth floor has gone the other way. There has been no true communication between the interim leader and the president, and that has been very sad."²⁴

This rift between the party caucus and the party executive never surfaced publicly. And while the rift between the caucus and its leader was also kept relatively quiet, it erupted in late November, 1995 with media reports of caucus in-fighting. Lynn Verge said the media reports had to be based on insider information.

I suspect that before that [time] members of caucus were very blatantly undermining me by talking "off the record" to Doug Letto [CBC Television legislative reporter] and other reporters. There was major self-inflicted damage by then. The CBC Morning Show did a commentary about goings on in our caucus which had to come from the caucus, there was too much detail for them to get it any other way.²⁵

Lynn Verge's leadership of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador had failed by November, 1995. By this point in her tenure her inability to do anything about the internal bickering and infighting was becoming public knowledge, and the public bickering was preceded by an organized effort to undermine Verge, to embarrass her and discredit her leadership.

The plot to undermine Lynn Verge's leadership was revealed during the party's executive council meeting held in October, 1995 — just six months after Verge had become

²⁴Powell.

²⁵Verge.

leader. A district president, Robert Lundrigan, fired the first volley when he stood up in the meeting and accused Verge of using party funds to pay John Laschinger for the work he had done on her leadership campaign.²⁶

Myself, Gerry Ottenheimer and John Carter were the only ones on our feet, outraged at what was being insinuated. [By this time] the attack was coming from all over the room, not from just this one district president, it was very well co-ordinated and I was looking at her [Verge] and it was almost as if she wasn't getting it, like the penny was not dropping with her. We had people who weren't in any camp asking what was going on and then we had that fool of a party treasurer stand up and say that he wasn't in charge of the money, he didn't know where the money had gone, and the president said that he never approved any party money for payment to John Laschinger and that, in fact, no party money had been paid to John Laschinger and then other members of the executive got up and basically called the president a liar — it was very ugly.²⁷

Dunderdale said that, in the beginning, Lynn Verge did not seem to be aware of the severity of the accusations. But when she realized what was being insinuated, she was annoyed by the end of the day.

She was truly upset because she was so innocent and it was so far-fetched to suggest that she might be misusing funds, she just couldn't fathom it, I mean it just wouldn't go into her brain that someone would suggest this. She called me that night around midnight. I decided to speak very plainly with her. I told her that she was going to have to get those fellows in caucus under control — because this is where that came from, the caucus — and she was going to have to get them under control now. You don't have any time and any other option but to do this. It wasn't long before I was told that there was a plot to oust her and to oust her before Christmas. If there were two or three that would stand with her, that was all.²⁸

Dunderdale, and others interviewed, have suggested Bill Matthews played a major

²⁶Kathy Dunderdale, personal interview, September 12, 1996.

²⁷Dunderdale.

²⁸Dunderdale.

role in orchestrating the plot against Lynn Verge.²⁹ Yet, Verge defends her decision to appoint Bill Matthews as Opposition House Leader. While he had held the position before Verge became leader, why would she appointed him to the position again considering his vigorous work to defeat her?

I honestly felt that he was the best caucus member for that job. And it seemed to me to be a happy coincidence that he probably would be the most important member of caucus given his stature within the group to have on my side, to try to meld the group. He had supported Loyola Sullivan although I had the impression at that time that he didn't have anything in particular against me. In retrospect, perhaps what he had against me was that I am female.³⁰

The majority of the PC caucus had grown more uncomfortable with their leader. Much of the public focus of this discomfort came from Verge's unique position on the education reform issue during the summer months of 1995.³¹ Premier Clyde Wells had called a province-wide referendum on the denominational school issue, with the vote to take place September 5, 1995. Verge provided her own analysis of how her position affected her caucus.

I was called upon as a political leader to make public my own personal choice in the referendum and my position and my reasons were, admittedly, very difficult for people

²⁹Verge. Laschinger.

³⁰Verge.

³¹Lynn Verge's position was that the provincial government's proposed constitutional amendment didn't go far enough and the amendment "further entrenches the power of the churches running denominational schools." She said that rather than provide for significant change, as the government claimed, the proposals would entrench the right of denominational groups to assign and dismiss teachers on discriminatory, non-work related grounds. "Because of all these uncertainties and because I do support education reform, I will vote No in the referendum." Source: *The Evening Telegram* (St. John's, NF.) August 23, 1995, 3.

to understand . . . I took quite a beating, who knows how it filtered out a month or two later, but at the time the news media and the commentators behaved like a mindless herd . . . That caused some problems within caucus, particularly among those whose constituents voted No heavily. But we got through that. I suffered some damage because of it and some of the reporters created the impression that I was insincere in my approach, which I think was the most damaging criticism of all.³²

The government narrowly won the educational referendum, with a ten percent majority.³³ The political climate in Newfoundland was extremely hot. The close vote was a set-back for the Wells Liberals. But the PC caucus was much too divided to take any credit or win any advantage from the closeness of the vote. While some members were trying to head off a public squabble over the leadership question, the leader's unusual position on the education reform issue gave others new ammunition with which to work to oust her.

The big thing we had lying in wait for us was that after she got the leadership, [Clyde] Wells decided to approach the [education] issue ideologically and that forced her hand and she got ideological on it and less political and less practical. At the time in her school of thought, with regard to her own position, there was no more than five or ten percent of the population [with her]. The rest were either for it or against it on various sorts of broad gut terms. She was the only one who made a fine-tuned analysis and stuck by it. But it was to her political detriment if not destruction.³⁴

Lynn Verge later discovered there were things going on behind the scenes within the party that she was not aware of. She did not immediately see the connection between what

³²Verge.

³³The final vote was 110,614 (54.8%) Yes, 90,673 (44.9%) No. There were 423 (.29%) rejected ballots, for a total voter turnout of 201,710 (51.9%). Report of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1995.

³⁴Hewlett.

she called the the erratic behaviour of Bill Matthews, and the plot to undermine her as leader, mainly because she didn't put much stock into the ability of people to successfully conspire against anyone: "I still find it hard to believe that Bill's behaviour was consciously calculated to take me out of the leadership position."³⁵

However, following the party's executive council meeting held in October 1995, it became clearer to Verge that something was very seriously wrong. The arrangement the party had entered into with John Laschinger was brought into question. Laschinger was hired by Lynn Verge to manage her 1995 leadership campaign. He also had been retained by the party to help prepare for two by-elections (in Grand Falls, which the PC Party won, and in Gander, which they lost) as well as the provincial election, which the Tories expected would be held in either spring or early fall, 1996.

The first person to bring it [the Laschinger payment] up was Robert Lundrigan, and to be perfectly honest I didn't realize what he was hinting at at first, I think it was after the meeting when I realized the inferences he was making, because what he was hinting at was that I hadn't fully paid John Laschinger, intimating — although he didn't do it explicitly enough for me to grasp until later — that I had abused my position as party leader by having the party enter into an arrangement with John Laschinger that involved essentially using party funds to pay John Laschinger for work that he had done on my leadership campaign.³⁶

Kathy Dunderdale is convinced there was an orchestrated movement within the executive council to make this an issue.³⁷ In retrospect, Verge agreed with Dunderdale's

³⁵Verge.

³⁶Verge.

³⁷Dunderdale.

assessment.

I felt ambushed, partly because I honestly hadn't heard anyone suggest such a thing [before the meeting] and it certainly was never in my mind, because as far as I was concerned we had done a fantastic job of paying all my leadership campaign bills promptly and that was past history. I was completely taken by surprise. I didn't even realize what was being hinted at. It wasn't until later that it really dawned on me that what they were really getting at was that I was having the party pay party funds to look after a leadership debt. All I was guessing at the time was that there were people who didn't like John Laschinger, either because he was from Ontario, or because he had worked on my leadership. When the meeting started getting out of control at some point Gerry Ottenheimer and a couple of others spoke up in a helpful way to put things in perspective, but when Robert Lundrigan, Martin Hammond from Kilbride district, and Larry Vaters from the youth federation started on John Laschinger, Cal [party president Calvin Powell] didn't step in to take control and I was left as leader to try to deal with what was being said.³⁸

Verge realized a few hours later that it had been part of an organized and ongoing strategy on the part of a number of people to ambush her — she said it was hard to say how many and who were part of it — but she believed that the people who had spoken up had been primed. Was this a conspiracy, or simply a manifestation of the more bitter aspects of the factionalism which had split the party since the late 1970s?

Lynn Verge knew that because she was only leader of the opposition, she lacked the power and the tools to bring the factional infighting to an end. She said there may well have been other factors which fed this factionally-based plot: aspects of her behaviour; aspects of her leadership style which may have caused others to work against her; and aspects which she may not even have been aware of which exacerbated the situation. Verge acknowledged that the PC Party has been split and this split has been with the party for more than twenty years.

³⁸Verge.

In the years that followed '79, even with Peckford's strength, and even with [Bill] Doody bowing out, I could sense remnants of the Doody campaign and the Peckford campaign. And a lot of the Doody people supported Len Simms in '89 and supported Loyola Sullivan in '95. And a lot of the people who supported Peckford in '79, supported Tom Rideout in '89 and supported me in '95. I don't think what happened after the '95 leadership was a marked departure, it was a matter of degree, but it was more of the same. The Sullivan camp probably continued in various ways, overt or subtle.³⁹

Lynn Verge knew immediately following the party's executive council meeting that she was in trouble. It had taken only six months for the party to openly work against her. This was an organized conspiracy.

I knew for a long time that there were a lot of people in the party and the caucus who really didn't feel any warmth towards me, but I thought they were practical enough to want to use me enough as long as I was riding high in the polls.⁴⁰

Unfortunately for Lynn Verge, the tactics used by her detractors in October were carried over to the party's efforts to mount an effective election campaign. Looking back at the party's preparations for the 1996 provincial election, and with the benefit of hindsight, Verge was disappointed that Bill Matthews, who had decided not to seek re-election, and who she had asked to co-chair the campaign readiness team, was very disruptive during the election campaign. Matthews was critical of some of the campaign strategies and policies and often caused havoc at campaign headquarters by starting vigorous arguments with a number of the female volunteers about the problems of having a female leader and the role women should play in politics. Some of these arguments became quite heated at times. Verge

³⁹Verge.

⁴⁰Verge.

thought Matthews may have been motivated by a personal change he had made in his marital status at the time.

Around the time that he publicly made this change he told me about it and he also told me that he doubted that he would run in the next election. I believe that the main reason why he didn't run was that he didn't think he would get re-elected, and that he had come to this conclusion long before Brian Tobin came on the provincial scene. In retrospect I don't think Bill Matthews was ever comfortable with me as leader. Probably, mainly because I am a woman. That's what I believe.⁴¹

The 1996 provincial election campaign was everything the Tories thought it would not be. Most caucus members were convinced they would be running against Clyde Wells, but it was Brian Tobin who returned to Newfoundland from Ottawa to lead the Liberals after Wells resigned in December 1995. The Tories also thought the election would be held in the early fall of 1996, or if earlier than that, in late spring. No one had any idea Brian Tobin would call a provincial election for February. Despite putting on a good face, the PC Party was unprepared. The Liberals produced a slick Red Book of campaign promises, taking a page from their national cousins in the Liberal Party of Canada, while the Tories rushed to cobble together their efforts at policy reconstruction.

The Liberals produced an impressive television advertising campaign, with Brian Tobin offering comforting generalizations built around a campaign theme which urged Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to vote Liberal "For A Better Tomorrow." The PC television campaign showed Verge in unflattering close-ups, berating the Liberals under Clyde Wells. Tory campaign headquarters was swamped with calls from disgruntled supporters who

⁴¹Verge.

wanted the ads stopped. New ads were pulled together from footage of Verge's first speech of the campaign — a speech many journalists suggested was the best of her career⁴² — in which she introduced both the Tory "Blue Book" and the slate of candidates for the party. But all districts were not represented and even though the number of seats in the legislature had once again changed — reduced to forty-eight from fifty-two — the PCs initially had trouble filling a full slate of candidates.

After Verge was defeated in the 1996 election she resigned as leader. The caucus, not surprisingly, chose Loyola Sullivan as the party's interim leader. Sullivan was determined to bring his own style to the leadership of the party and worked to distance "his" party from the one led by Verge. In his opinion, the party had "given away" the political right to Liberal leader Clyde Wells and the PC Party under his leadership would work to win it back.⁴³

Sullivan contended Verge really never had a vision of where to take the party.⁴⁴ Verge, however, maintained she was trying to be inclusive, to invite new people to the party

⁴²I was approached by several journalists who covered the speech who expressed the view that, in their opinion, the speech was one of the best of Verge's career. The journalists included Carmel Smith, CBC Television News, and Craig Jackson, The Evening Telegram. The Evening Telegram also praised the policy document in an editorial published February 6, 1996, saying "The Tory document offers a wealth of detail, not only on the major issues of the day such as debt management, education and health reform, but it also has considerable detail on forest policy, social services and job creation in rural Newfoundland." The Evening Telegram (St. John's, NF), February 6, 1996, 4.

⁴³Loyola Sullivan, personal interview, October 10, 1996.

⁴⁴Sullivan.

and make the party attractive to them.⁴⁵ She was not a toe-the-line politician; her challenge was to lead the party in the direction she wanted it to go. But the rebellious caucus refused to allow her to do that. The result from the 1996 provincial election for Lynn Verge was defeat for herself and the party. She had lost her own seat, and the party had suffered a serious setback with five other former caucus members joining her in defeat.

The six former caucus members who had held onto their seats were joined by three new members: John Ottenheimer, Tom Osborne, and Bob French. Four of the nine winners were from the group who had supported Verge. I have called these "progressives" because they supported Verge during the leadership campaign. They included incumbents Jack Byrne and Paul Shelley, as well as the newcomers Ottenheimer and Osborne, both of whom had worked very hard for Verge during the leadership. Also elected were four from the "conservative" group who had supported Loyola Sullivan: incumbents Roger Fitzgerald, Ed Byrne, and Harvey Hodder, and the newcomer French, as well as Sullivan himself. When Sheila Osborne, mother of Tom Osborne and a staunch Verge supporter and worker during the 1995 leadership, won a by-election in St. John's West in July, 1996, the balance in the caucus was even.

⁴⁵Verge.

5

Conclusion

Why Lynn Verge's Leadership Failed

Lynn Verge was unable to unite the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. She had lost her own seat in the 1996 provincial election — less than a year after she was elected leader — and the party suffered its worst electoral defeat in twenty-five years. Her leadership of the PC Party had failed. It failed because of four inter-related factors. First, she failed because she won the leadership of a party which was already split into two ideologically-based factions which became more deeply divided over her leadership. Second, her leadership failed because the ruling elite of the PC Party — the caucus — was not willing to accept a woman as leader. Third, she failed because she and her party were in opposition. And, fourth, her leadership failed because she was too slow to respond to the challenge of leadership; unable to fulfil the inherent authority required of her as leader.

5.1 The Challenge of Ideologically-based Factionalism

The most immediate challenge for Lynn Verge when she became leader of the PC Party was to deal with the internal party factionalism. The greatest influence on the caucus was the competing values of the two factions within the party. Ideological factionalism is an explanation for the motives of the major players because many of them had convinced themselves that this woman would undoubtedly take the party 'too far' to the left. Because Lynn Verge had, in the early months of her leadership, demonstrated to the caucus that she

would be an ineffectual leader, they denied her the legitimacy she felt she deserved when she was elected leader.

While gender prejudice contributed significantly to the motives of caucus, the resistance mounted by the majority of the PC Party influentials was, in effect, ideologically based. Cynthia Fuchs Epstein wrote that "emphasis on women's limitations because of their sex-role-associated status is an exclusionary mechanism — an ideological ploy to keep women out of the running for high-ranking activity — and not necessarily a reflection of reality."¹

The reality for the PC Party, when Lynn Verge made her acceptance speech following her narrow three-vote majority win of the party's leadership, was a party divided. The internal strife within the party simmered for most of the early summer of 1995 after Verge's convention win. Immediately following her win, many new people were elected to senior positions on the party executive.² Many of these were supporters of Lynn Verge, and came from the ranks of the progressives. This set up an ideological struggle between the party executive and the majority of the all-male caucus. The caucus clung to its power within the party, and succeeded in keeping the executive away from the decision-making table. Forces worked behind the scenes, as caucus members joined with old guard, male executive council members to hatch a plot at the party's executive council meeting in October, 1995.

¹Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *Deceptive Distinctions: Sex, Gender, and the Social Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1988), 12.

²The election of the party executive was held the day following the leadership.

The scheme, orchestrated to discredit Lynn Verge by accusing her of allegedly misusing party funds to pay her own leadership campaign expenses, was the first major step in an organized attempt to provide the caucus with a means to force her resignation. The strategy did not have time to run its course because panic erupted within the ranks of the PC caucus in November and December — just two months prior to the call of the provincial election. The panic was precipitated by a drop of five points in a well-publicized opinion poll for the party and brought out the worst in many of the caucus members.

5.2 The Challenge of Gender

The gender of the leader actually contributed to the factionalism factor, for while the ideologically-based factionalism was a problem for Verge, as it was for the leaders of the party who came before her — and those who will follow her — the cleavage within the party was exacerbated by Lynn Verge's gender, because a majority of the caucus simply refused to work with a woman.

Canadian research from the mid-1980s points to the enormous challenge this presented for Lynn Verge, as the first woman to lead a political party in Newfoundland and Labrador. Janine Brodie suggests that if there is to be an attitude change concerning the willingness of male political elites to accept a woman as leader, it will not come easy.³

When a national sample of voters was asked in 1984 whether "more should be done for women's equality," eighty-five percent of women and eighty percent of men agreed that

³Janine Brodie, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 29.

more should be done. When delegates to the 1983 federal PC leadership convention were asked the same question, only forty-six percent of women and twenty-eight percent of men agreed. The following year, sixty-three percent of female delegates to the national Liberal leadership convention agreed; while the figure for male Liberal delegates was thirty-eight percent.⁴ These data show that the most active members of the national PC and Liberal parties of the day, the people who still take on the responsibility to nominate the candidates, run the campaigns, and often run for office themselves, were out of touch with the Canadian electorate regarding the question of whether or not more should be done for women's equality.

At the provincial level in Newfoundland and Labrador, there was a deep split within the PC Party over the acceptance of a woman as leader. One faction within the party, the progressives, believed strongly that Lynn Verge would have been a good premier because of her political background and experience, and the fact she was a woman. The other faction, the conservatives, while recognizing Lynn Verge's wealth of political experience within caucus, had convinced themselves that she would steer the party in the "wrong direction," that it needed to move to the right, not to the left, and the symbolism of a woman as leader of the party was inconsistent with their view of the party. This attitude, it would appear, is popular in western democracies. And, as Tom Brook has suggested, women and men who believe in a more equitable electoral system will have to accept incremental change if they

⁴Brodie, 1985, 29.

wish to minimize backlash and create permanent alterations in party structures and women's representation. Brook suggested that "the chance of some dramatic breakthrough in the next few years, resulting in equal legislative representation for women is highly unlikely. What is more likely is a gradual increase in the number of women directly involved in the power processes, more women seeking direct political power, and more women and men being elected who will promote gender equity."⁵

There is an underlying theme that emerges through the interviews for this study — one which speaks to an explanation for the behaviour of some of the men involved. Francine D'Amico presents the argument that the very idea that women's political participation must be explained, as though men's participation and behaviour in office were the norm, tells us that gender-as-power is at work in a negative way.⁶ A major focus of social research in the area of women in politics, and one which is relevant to this analysis of Lynn Verge's leadership, is the argument that attitudes held by male party elites are more relevant to the success or failure of women candidates than the biases or discriminatory attitudes toward women which may be held by voters at large.

The question of public receptivity of female [political] elites has thus become a prominent concern of public opinion analysts, who generally conclude that voters do not discriminate against women candidates. Yet the research also maintains that there are widely held assumptions by [male] party elites that female candidates lose elections because of popular resistance to their gender. This is based upon relevant

⁵Tom Brook, *Getting Elected in Canada* (Stratford, ON: Mercury, 1991), 86.

⁶Francine D'Amico, "Women National Leaders," in *Women in World Politics* eds. Francine D'Amico and Peter R. Beckman (Westport, Conn: Bergin & Garvey, 1995), 27.

empirical research from analysis of actual election returns. This research offers little evidence in support of the view that voters discriminate against women candidates simply because they are women.⁷

PC Party elites — particularly the caucus — discriminated against Lynn Verge because of the mix of her “leftist,” progressive tendencies and her moderate feminism. Her political makeup was a deadly combination for Verge’s leadership of the PC Party. It became evident very early into her leadership that a majority of the small but influential segment of the elite of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador stood against her.

Heather MacIvor’s findings support the positions taken by many of those interviewed for this study,⁸ when she wrote:

The barriers to women in politics are unofficial and often invisible. They lie both inside and outside the political system: in the political parties, in the structures and traditions of the political institutions, in the ideologies of the public-private dichotomy and the gendered division of labour, and in the socio-economic disadvantages and family structures that flow from those ideologies.⁹

But while Lynn Verge had overcome many of those barriers in her seventeen years in public life, she understood the reason why there was so much resistance within the caucus and party elites to the notion of a woman leader.

Maybe more than a lot of other people — because I’ve spent a lot of my life thinking

⁷Sylvia B. Bashevkin, *Toeing the Lines: Women and Party Politics in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 147-148.

⁸Personal Interviews: Lynn Verge, April 9, 1997; Alvin Hewlett, October 16, 1997; Harvey Hodder, October 14, 1997; Kathy Dunderdale, September 12, 1996; Calvin Powell, October 26, 1996; Jack Byrne, October 26, 1996; and John Laschinger, August 17, 1996.

⁹Heather MacIvor, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Peterborough, ON.: Broadview Press, 1996) 224.

about it — I knew I was breaking new ground. During the years that I served as an MHA, the public went some distance in accepting a woman in politics — a woman as a rank-and-file MHA, a woman as a cabinet minister, albeit, perhaps, a token woman.¹⁰

Verge realized that as a woman leader and potentially a woman premier, she would be confronting the challenge of being accepted as a leader, simply because she was a woman. She took a positive interpretation of the 1996 election results. While there may have been a variety of factors involved when voters determined who they would vote for in the 1996 election, about forty percent of voters cast ballots for the PC Party. Lynn Verge believed that this level of support for the party she led represented political progress for women in Newfoundland and Labrador, and had circumstances been somewhat different, she could have won.¹¹

Information gathered through the interviews for this study suggests that had Lynn Verge been able to stay on as leader of the PC Party she would have changed the party. She would have worked to remove many of the barriers that appear to entrench male domination of the political process in the PC Party and the province. Her political background and the way she rose through the ranks of the PC caucus reinforce this conclusion.

Two of Verge's staunchest male supporters, MHA Jack Byrne and Party President Calvin Powell, said that the real hurdle Verge seemed unable to get over, from the perspective of the party, was her close association with the province's women's movement. The

¹⁰Verge.

¹¹Verge.

perception was that Lynn Verge's feminism was a threat to the ideological base of the provincial PC Party.

Before entering public life, Lynn Verge had been a member of the executive of the National Action Committee (NAC) on the Status of Women and had served at the local level with the Corner Brook Status of Women's Council. She was seen by many in Newfoundland and Labrador who called themselves feminists, or supporters of the feminist movement, to be a leader. Despite this perception, this was not a status Verge set out to achieve, although her ascendancy to the leadership of one of the province's two major political parties was aided and abetted in great measure by some of the most influential leaders of the feminist movement in the province.¹² Unfortunately for Lynn Verge, the PC Party was not ready for her.

5.3 The Challenge of Being in Opposition

George Perlin's theory of the opposition party syndrome fits the experience of 1995 PC Party closely, as the Newfoundland Tories were mired in a state of confusion and infighting. Although Lynn Verge knew she was being undermined by her own caucus, she put on her best face for the public and worked diligently to put forward an election campaign that was impressive despite the negativity around her. Her speech to candidates when she announced the party's platform and introduced their "Blue Book" policy document was

¹²Ann Bell is a former President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Council on the Status of Women, and a long-time friend and confidant of Lynn Verge. A number of requests were made for an interview, but she declined, saying there were some things she "would have to take to her grave."

lauded by the news media.¹³ But it was not enough. The party went down to defeat at the polls in the February election. She had been leader of the PC Party for just 302 days. Her exit was as dramatic as her entry, as a loss by just seven votes in her own riding prompted a recount. Impatient and perhaps ill-advised, two caucus members, Ed Byrne and Roger Fitzgerald, publicly criticized their leader, saying she should leave before the recount.¹⁴ This gratuitous gesture provided a public glimpse at a party deeply divided internally.

Lynn Verge said the actions of her two caucus colleagues were “unprofessional,” particularly when the comments served to publicly undermine the party leader.

What Ed Byrne and Roger Fitzgerald did on TV really shocked me, but in a curious way I sensed a certain relief because their undermining had been made public. Things are always easier to deal with when they're out in the open. But I was still blown away by their stupidity and I still can't understand it because my days were very numbered and they didn't have to do that. I'm just amazed at it . . . I never did see the interview and it's probably just as well. When I did resign it was almost a relief to get out of there. The way I took it came naturally. It's not something I had planned for.¹⁵

Her experience as leader has greatly affected the way Lynn Verge thinks about public life, but she said the experience has not changed her as a person. She said that there were times when she found it difficult to keep going. She understood the necessity of putting forward the perception that the party was united. However, it was not the behaviour of

^{13a}“The Tory document offers a wealth of detail, not only on the major issues of the day such as debt management, education and health reform, but it also has considerable detail on forest policy, social services and job creation in rural Newfoundland.” Editorial, *The Evening Telegram* (St. John's, NF) February 6, 1996, 4.

¹⁴Tracey Barron, “Tories get burned: Party's image blackened by public spat over Verge's leadership,” *The Evening Telegram* (St. John's, NF) February 29, 1996, 1.

¹⁵Verge.

people who had opposed her for the leadership that she found difficult to take. What unsettled her the most was the behaviour of people who had supported her, only to abandon her in her time of need.

I function best when I have at least some people around me who take the positive approach and who energize me, but I was being drowned in this chorus of negativity; I found it difficult to keep going.¹⁶

5.4 The Challenge of Leadership

Caucus members were watching Lynn Verge very closely after she had won the leadership. They were waiting for her to put her own stamp on the new PC Party, to give it new direction under her leadership, and to give that leadership legitimacy. But, according to Harvey Hodder, a potentially supportive member of caucus, she did not deliver.

When she became leader it very quickly confirmed for me why I didn't support her. She became leader in May and we were without a staff, she didn't make decisions. [As a leader] you've got to facilitate unity. My impression is that she didn't do a great deal to welcome Loyola and he wasn't embraced to suggest that we are all part of a team. Instead, what she did was she came in and closeted herself for lengthy periods of time in her office with her door closed.¹⁷

Caucus members who had supported Loyola Sullivan complained that they had become "strangers in [their] own household."¹⁸

The party was stuck and looked to Verge to get them going again. Members of the rival Sullivan camp expected Verge to get the ball rolling and they say they were willing to

¹⁶Verge.

¹⁷Hodder.

¹⁸Hodder.

work with her — or at least give her the benefit of time to see which direction she would take the party. But her slowness at naming a new team and appointing a new staff exacerbated a situation that was bound to fail if nothing was done. Then she made another critical mistake.

She made the mistake of keeping the same House Leader, keeping the same critic roles. She didn't come in and say 'I'm the leader, I'm going to make my mark on this party right away.' She kept Bill Matthews on as House Leader, which caused some of her own supporters to kind of say 'why did I work so hard to support her?' So right away there were some rifts within her own ranks as well.¹⁹

Unfortunately, some of the caucus members who had worked within Verge's organization were also "ungracious in victory,"²⁰ and the anger on both sides continued for a long time. Hodder said there were people in caucus who never spoke to each other for months. For quite some time the party just could not find the means to put the past behind them and learn to work together. Those who were close to the problem suggest Verge did not do enough to face the problem head-on.

For her part, Lynn Verge said that she found it extremely difficult to keep going — especially in the last three months of 1995, when she was surrounded by a tremendous amount of negativity. She saw her former ally Alvin Hewlett succumb to the negative forces around the caucus.

He kept running to me, telling me about all the negativity. There are various ways in which you can process reality. There are some people who can take a challenge and regard it as a challenge and concentrate on what has to be done to meet the challenge

¹⁹Hodder.

²⁰Hodder.

and even have some fun working at it. And then there are other people who present you with an unsurmountable problem and moan and groan incessantly about how impossible it is to beat.²¹

Lynn Verge said that in her political life she functioned best when she had people around her who took the positive approach and who energized her — people like her mentor and advisor Lorne Wheeler. She said that when Lorne Wheeler retired it was a terrible loss.

Lorne was constantly reassuring Alvin or other people who were moaning and groaning and expressing doubts and seeing the worst. But without Lorne and with Alvin, who had been my ally, getting drowned in this chorus of negativity, I found it difficult to keep going.²²

Her experience as the first woman to lead one of the two major political parties in Newfoundland and Labrador was not what Lynn Verge had hoped it would be. She knew there would be tremendous challenges when she decided to seek the leadership of the party — the challenge of having the party accept her as leader, and the challenge of having voters accept and support a woman as leader. While she was successful in meeting both those challenges, the root of her failure was her inability to demonstrate to party elites — particularly her own caucus colleagues — that a woman could be accepted as party leader by the rank and file of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, and a woman could be accepted as Premier of the province by the voters of Newfoundland and Labrador. The burden of shouldering this challenge alone is much too onerous to lay all the blame for the party's failures on Lynn Verge. But, as leader, she would have to have shouldered at least

²¹Verge.

²²Verge.

part of the responsibility for the foibles and failures of the party during her term as leader in late 1995 and early 1996. She has done that. But those who should share that responsibility are those members within the caucus who worked against her to the detriment of the party's future. I have argued that these forces within caucus dictated the failure of the party by their own intransigence. Their actions may for some time compromise the future of the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Following her 1995-96 leadership debacle, Lynn Verge did not rule out a return to public life. But she gave no indication of when or where, or if, that might be. She was asked by former national PC Party leader Jean Charest to run in the 1997 federal election in the riding of Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte, but declined.²³ She returned to the practice of law in Corner Brook in early 1997.

²³Verge.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS (Listed Alphabetically)

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|-----|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | Jack Byrne | October 26, 1996 |
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Jack Byrne - Interview October 26, 1996

[Jack Byrne, the member for St. John's East Extern (now called Cape St. Francis in the redistributed House of Assembly), was the last MHA to make a move to either of the two leadership hopefuls, throwing his support behind Lynn Verge. He played a vital role in her leadership bid, serving as co-campaign manager with John Laschinger.]

A lot of the people — the long-time party people, from what I could gather — were supporting Sullivan. Why? Because it went back to the time she [Verge] was in cabinet, and many people considered that she wasn't very flexible. And people felt that maybe they wouldn't be able to influence her. There are people who have never accepted her win within the party. During last fall, leading up the winter election and [Brian] Tobin coming back, she was being undermined from within. I brought it up a number of times but nothing changed . . . if that had not happened, Tobin may not have come back. If Lynn had gotten the support from people that had opposed her during the leadership, that Loyola is now getting from the people that had opposed him during the leadership, it would have been a different story during the last election and I doubt if Tobin would have even come back. There were a number of reasons, but the predominant [one] was that some of these people — and it was prevalent during the election — just could not accept a woman as a leader. There was a great deal of bitterness [during the leadership]. It was a battle-royal. I never did make any negative comments about Loyola. I tried to tell people that when this [the leadership race] is over, whether we win or lose, we've got to work with him. We can't divide the party this way. But there were only two people running, and for us, that's what ended up happening and at times it became personal for some people on both sides. People used to say to me: 'Jack do you

know what you're up against? — You're up against money, the movers and the shakers, and you haven't got a chance.' I knew it was going to be close. I had us up by about 30 votes. But during the leadership [convention] itself at the hotel a lot of stuff went on and people changed. We had two votes walk out on us over some small petty thing.²⁴

²⁴The two Verge delegates who left the convention in a huff were Roland and Angela Kean, who got in a dispute with the party executive over whether or not Angela was an ex-officio member of the party. When the party executive ruled against Angela, the two left the convention and did not vote. Both had been Verge supporters.

Kathy Dunderdale - Interview September 12, 1996

[Kathy Dunderdale, is a former president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities, a former PC candidate (unsuccessful) in the 1993 provincial election, and a former president of the Progressive Conservative Party's Women's Association. She also served as co-chair of Lynn Verge's leadership campaign team.]

Clyde Wells had asked me to run for the Liberals in the 1993 election but my experiences with the treatment we received as a federation [the Federation of Municipalities] by the Wells government helped me decide that the Liberal government had to go — and I would work to remove them from office; so when I was asked to run for the Progressive Conservatives in Fortune-Hermitage I said 'yes'. And it was like I was a lamb to the slaughter. So that was it, I was in then and I was branded a PC and it wasn't so much a call to the party, as such, it was more a reaction against the way Clyde Wells and his government treated people. When Clyde Wells had asked me if I would be interested in running I told him at the time that I wanted to serve out my term as president of the federation and I wouldn't run for any party. But within the ensuing 10 months things had gotten really bad. The federation was pleading for consultation and input and we were ignored and we were being treated very badly. We were treated with contempt, we were lied to, and we were ignored. In the end it made me committed, not such much to the PC Party, but to seeing Clyde Wells go, and I think there is a difference.

I was never any great fan of PC leader Len Simms and the people he had around him, and in the beginning, when I did get involved, I had a lot of problems with the way they

conducted themselves — policy-wise. I wasn't particularly comfortable around these guys — and it was *these* guys. I had seen Lynn, had watched her for a number of years and I liked her. And on a number of occasions she had sought me out when I had become president of the federation. I remember a couple of weeks before a convention in Corner Brook I got a call from her to invite me to lunch or breakfast and it was just to find out who I was and to let me know who she was, and she maintained a relationship with me over all that time with no hidden agenda, other than an exchange of views, being supportive and an exchange of information, and I really liked that, that's the way I thought things should work.

But in terms of the party itself, I was never very comfortable in the presence of the men who dominated both the public offices and the backrooms. The only way I could describe it is that there was way too much testosterone there. They were very anxious for me to run in Fortune-Hermitage and once I committed myself to it I put my heart and soul into it, but trying to talk to Len Simms or his chief of staff, they would knock you in the head 10 times in the first few minutes of the conversation just in the language they were using. I was in a district where there was no organization, no money, and I wasn't from the district, and I was trying to do my best for the party, but it seemed to be more important to them to have the president of the Federation of Municipalities, regardless of who that was, so they could trumpet that fact and help them raise a bit more money provincially, but I wasn't getting much support and when I did get something it was because I had to threaten every other day to walk into St. John's and wring someone's neck. I don't know how many times I heard them say 'Now Kathy, my dear,' and other little power plays in language. So, for me it was

frustrating and I never bonded with them in a political sort of way.

When I had decided to run, Lynn called and once again offered her support and her encouragement. And because I became an *ex officio* member of the party as a candidate of record, I started going to conventions and got involved with the women's association. When I became chair of the women's association and was part of the party's executive council, my relationship with Lynn deepened at the party level and I got a much better idea of where Lynn was coming from and what she stood for.

I thought that Lynn Verge would make a good leader of the PC Party. When Len Simms decided to resign I remember it was around Christmas time and I called Lynn and left a message on her (answering) machine encouraging her to run for the leadership. She called me back and we talked about it for a while and she said she was seriously considering it. Then Ann Bell called and we discussed whether or not I would be willing to help and I said I'd do just about anything but fund-raising, that is not my forte. And then Lynn called me and asked me if I would co-chair her campaign. I didn't really know what that meant, but Lynn and I talked about it and I thought that if Lynn felt I could do it, then I'd try. I could also help counter-off the provincial balance that was gone — especially the whole south coast — with Glenn Tobin and Bill Matthews (the two PC MHAs from the Burin Peninsula) supporting Loyola Sullivan. And in terms of my association with the federation she was wise enough to know that there was at least 10 people that I knew in every municipality in this province, and they would know my name.

We knew we would be breaking new ground by offering a woman as leader of the

Progressive Conservative Party — not only on a provincial level, but within the PC Party itself. The way that the men thought, the men who dominated the party, and with whom I had come in contact with in the few years of my involvement with the party; I certainly had their view with regard to women in general, and particularly with regard to the PC Women's Association. I knew that this was an 'old boys' club' and we had some really strong sexist attitudes and views towards women that I wasn't particularly comfortable with. And it was something you couldn't forget for five minutes, in terms of how you conducted yourself. I knew that even in the slightest way, it was about changing attitudes, and attitudes needed to be changed, even in the way I conducted myself when I was around them. What struck me about Lynn becoming leader was that this was all going to become easier. That we could relax a little more. That a standard was going to be set that people were going to have to try to aspire to in a public way, if not in a private way, which would have made life easier. It's all very naive now when I look back on it.

Over there, at the MUN PC Club, we saw young, educated men, who were supporting Loyola Sullivan, who were downright abusive to delegates, especially female delegates. We cannot ignore the influence this must have had on young people, particularly young women. We had delegates from Memorial University who were third and fourth year Women's Studies majors, and they're having a look at this and they're saying 'No, definitely not, I'm in the wrong place. I just don't fit here.' I think we turned off more young people in that process. But what amazes me about this is that we had a district association meeting here just before the convention last October, and one of the young women in our association is also involved

in the MUN PC Club and she said 'I can't stand it any more, they're still up there fighting the leadership. Every meeting we go to, they're still up there, a year and a half later, fighting.

I still have a great amount of difficulty dealing with these people. It just offends me. If you don't believe in the equality of people and if you don't have a fundamental respect for people regardless of gender, to me that puts on all kinds of red lights. Because rarely do we have single prejudices. If you have biases based on gender, they will bleed out into other areas. It becomes very difficult for a prejudiced person to be fair at other levels. And the hardest part of this for some of us to accept is that these men have enabling women around them who support them in this and pat them on the back and say they don't feel marginalized by it.

The power plays that grew out of the leadership convention carried over to the internal operations of the party. An indication of the party's lack of response to the kinds of personality struggles that were going on was the move by the party executive committee to hold conference calls rather than face-to-face meetings. This proved to be a disaster, for the process which was needed to be put in place to heal the wounds that came out of the leadership campaign never even got started. There were very few face-to-face meetings where individuals could interact on a more personal basis. And the ball was certainly in our court when it came to the first few meetings of the party. We had won [the leadership] and it was up to us to initiate the process of healing the wounds. But in the first few meetings we found there wasn't a sensitivity to our overtures. To come together as a group should have been where we would begin that whole process, and the fact that it was avoided very early

in the process by holding these conference calls, which were long and tedious and boring, didn't do it. There had been some pretty rough things said and done during the campaign that you almost needed some sort of catharsis or fence-mending.

Lynn tried some fence-mending by offering Bill Matthews the position of opposition house leader. But the move only alienated [Verge's ally] Neil Windsor, and a few other of the MHAs who had supported her. I think Neil fully expected to be appointed opposition house leader. I understand what she was trying to do in building a cohesive group by giving a nod to the other side. I think Neil was very loyal to her throughout her campaign and his nose was out of joint. All that did, of course, was alienate some of the people who had been on her side. I was a bit surprised with her choice of Bill Matthews, because of all the caucus members, Bill was the only one who refused to attend the meeting of the caucus and executive council which was held immediately following the leadership convention

In the last executive council meeting I attended, I finally decided I wasn't going to take the deceit any more and so I decided I was going to make it clear I was no longer going to be involved. Other things were happening within the party following Lynn's win that gave me the impression that some caucus members were growing uncomfortable because they perceived a threat from women in the party. I had heard that [Waterford-Kenmount MHA] Harvey Hodder was going around saying that the first thing they'd have to do is get rid of that god-damn women's association. So I said to them at the meeting: Here you have an association that gets very little support within the party and almost no support outside the party, it has no money and no resources, so why are you so threatened by it? I didn't get a

straight answer. I saw how those men used women within the party. I didn't see women on the executive council being given any sense of power, I didn't see women being appointed to committees and boards within the party with positions of power.

When Lynn became leader, the people with the power in the party, which were mostly headed by the men who had supported Loyola Sullivan, decided they would put up with her for a while to see how she would perform, but it didn't take long before they were working against her. And one of the ways they did this was to desexualize her. They told silly stories about Lynn going to the airport to meet Bob and when they met they would shake hands. What nonsense. Anyone who knows Lynn and Bob Verge knows they are sickly in love. They aren't demonstrative but all you have to do is notice the way they look at each other and you know these two people are in love and they're devoted to each other. But these men found this foreign to them, or something. Now not all of them, but a great deal of them, even though they were married men, treated most women they came in contact with as sex objects. And if any woman was new to the party, and if she had the slightest bit going for her in terms of looks, she was hit upon by these guys. But do you think they would suggest that she serve on a party committee or board?

I never raised the issue of the way the 'boys' of the party treated women with Lynn. But, I suspect that if Lynn was aware of it, she tended to turn a blind eye to it. Because Lynn ignored much of what these 'party men' did in the backrooms, she also didn't see the plot they were about to unveil before her eyes. She tends to be very goal-oriented and I don't think she saw the terrible power play that was about to unfold before her. They all went

down to confront her, they had a big caucus meeting where they confronted her, and by that time they had brought people like Alvin Hewlett, who had supported her, on their side. Neil [Windsor] who had been nursing his wounds for a couple of months saw this as an opportunity to get back in so he supported her, as did Jack Byrne, who stayed true to her. But the rest played right into Sullivan's and Matthews' hands, and Matthews' hands were all over it. I'm not sure what Loyola's role was, but he had one, and a major one, but he was cute enough to say 'Now you fellows will have to do this.' Bill [Matthews] did most of the work. I can remember going to election-readiness meetings and after the meetings Bill would go after Alvin, and there's no other way to describe it, Alvin would have these temper tantrums. And you could see Bill's Machiavellian touch, egging Alvin on and edging him on with enough truth spread into it about her shortcomings — let's face it she's not perfect and she has always been a procrastinator - and Bill would play on these and rile Alvin and some of the others up.

But the real plot wasn't revealed until the executive council meeting held in October, 1995 — about six months after Lynn had become leader. Robert Lundrigan [Port de Grave district president] stood up in the meeting and accused Lynn of using party funds to pay John Laschinger for the work he had done on her leadership campaign. Myself, Gerry Ottenheimer and John Carter were the only ones on our feet, outraged at what was being insinuated. The attack was coming from all over the room, not from just this one district president, it was very well co-ordinated and I was looking at her [Verge] and it was almost as if she wasn't getting it, like the penny was not dropping with her. We had people who weren't in any camp asking

what was going on and then we had that fool of a party treasurer stand up and say that he wasn't in charge of the money, he didn't know where the money had gone, and the president said that he never approved any party money for payment to John Laschinger and that, in fact, no party money had been paid to John Laschinger and then other members of the executive got up and basically called the president a liar — it was very ugly. And she sat up in the middle of it — just not getting it. When it did seep in and when she realized what was being done, she was very raw by the end of the day. She was truly upset because she was so innocent and it was so far-fetched to suggest that she might be misusing funds, she just couldn't fathom it, I mean it just wouldn't go into her brain that someone would suggest this. She called me that night around midnight. I decided to speak very plainly with her. I told her that she was going to have to get those fellows in caucus under control — because this is where that came from, the caucus — and she was going to have to get them under control now. You don't have any time and any other option but to do this. I carried on with my contacts across the province and it wasn't long before I was told that there was a plot to oust her and to oust her before Christmas. If there were two or three that would stand with her, that was all. So, Brian Tobin and Clyde Wells saved her bacon before Christmas by Wells resigning and Tobin coming in and calling the snap election. Then there was a real flurry about who was going to cross the floor and who was staying — and that was very real. But, other than [Rick] Woodford [MHA for Humber Valley], they all decided to sink or swim with her. So here you had all this crowd doing their damage to her for a year and a half, eroding the support of *ex officios* and other party supporters, expecting to get elected. Now they

were caught in their own snare. All the stuff that they had been doing to undermine her was now starting to reflect back on them. Their intention originally was to hang her, and to hang her by herself. Now they were all hung by their own doings. All the gossip within the party, and the growing public perception of the discontent was starting to haunt them.

Alvin Hewlett - Interview October 16, 1997

My experience started with the Moores years and there appeared to have been two sub-tribes in the PC Party, and the Moores tribe was sort of more conservative and a tad more right wing, and the Peckford side was more on the sort of the progressive side of Progressive Conservative. He was a red tory and he got innovative and the same can be said for Verge. With Rideout and Simms there wasn't a great deal there of one being red and the other one blue. But certainly the original split was established on red-blue lines and it carried through on personal loyalties and established groupings. The ideological split certainly showed up again in the Verge-Sullivan [leadership] because she tended to be more progressive on a lot of social issues.

There's no substitute for having a dynamic enough leader to unite the various forces and be seen as a genuine contender on the provincial scene. It's hard to say where one of those leaves off and the other one starts.

[Hewlett was asked by Brian Peckford to serve as a political executive assistant when Peckford was appointed by Frank Moores to cabinet as Minister of Municipal Affairs in October, 1974. He stayed with Peckford until the Premier resigned in 1989.]

It became evident very early that he [Peckford] was a red tory. He expanded municipal government in a lot of areas in rural Newfoundland. He certainly believed there was a role for government at all levels. When he got into Mines and Energy he played a very activist role with regard to Churchill Falls at least maintaining our position on Churchill Falls

and then the exploration phase of the offshore was just getting underway in a big way when he was Minister, and the first Hibernia strike occurred early — within the first few months — of his premiership.

He was obviously a bit of a red [tory] there because he was using the power of the state to impress upon the companies and the federal government that we had a right to a say in offshore development and we had a right to a share of the revenues. Ottawa's position at the time was that they had a right to give us a share if they felt like it, but we didn't have a right to it. That was the beginning of that fight. That firmly placed him in the hands of the red tories because the oil companies out west - many of them were operating in the Newfoundland offshore — they were used to operating in the Alberta context, which was very much a free market, free enterprise kind of thing.

On the Churchill Falls issue, he [Peckford] had a major dispute with Frank Moores because Moores wanted to do a deal with Rene Leveque, but Peckford wouldn't go for it and the deal basically died on the vine. He didn't think Newfoundland would get a good enough deal and there wouldn't be sufficient redress on the Upper Churchill. So the deal never occurred. Frank would have went for the deal because it was business. Peckford liked business, but only if it was profitable for everybody — including the people — through the government.

[When Brian Peckford retired, he left the seat in Green Bay district open, and Hewlett started immediately to canvass people in the district to support his own bid to win the nomination to represent the PC Party. Because he was struggling to get support for his own

political battles, he didn't get actively involved in the 1989 leadership contest that saw the party split over the candidacies of Tom Rideout and Len Simms. Rideout eventually won the leadership, and Hewlett says that if he did get involved, he would have supported Tom Rideout.]

I'd say my inclination, had I been actively involved, would have been to go with Rideout because it would have been more along personal lines. That leadership was an interim affair because the ideological split in the party wasn't so outwardly evident. But the personal loyalties were there. Peckford and company supported Rideout. Rideout came from the district next door to Green Bay, which is my home district. I got to know him in the Premier's Office because he spent a fair bit of time there as parliamentary assistant when I was chief of staff. I was there in the Premier's Office when he [Rideout] crossed the floor from the Liberals into our party. So I had an attachment to Rideout. A fair number of Peckford loyalists went with Rideout. Certainly the rift that had started in the Peckford/Moores years had carried on through there. Had I been involved, I would likely have been on Rideout's side.

With Lynn Verge, it was ideological on my part, because Sullivan seemed to have support from certain elements of the business community, and support of a majority of the caucus. My concern vis a vis Verge at the beginning was ideological in that our party needed a contest and it looked for a while that she might be alone. I called her aside before she announced and said that if she was going to do it [run for the leadership] I would support her, even if no one else did, because I won't see the first woman candidate for the premiership of

this province go before the microphones by herself. In my days with the Peckford government, we brought in the Status of Women's Council Act, and we brought in the Women's Policy Office in the bureaucracy, which survives to this day. So we had done certain progressive things that in these right wing times might be regarded as somewhat supportive of the feminist side of things. Peckford had brought in a lot of these reforms and I supported them. So, when we had our first female running for the leadership and possibly for the premiership I just couldn't stand by and let her go before the mikes alone. So once I did declare for her privately, we managed then in the intervening time before she made her public announcement to round up another few MHAs, and we had ourselves a real contest.

At the beginning I supported her knowing that I might have been the only one. My support was springing from my ideological base or background with Peckford because [I said to myself] I ought to be ashamed if we were putting forward the first woman candidate for premier and she had to go all alone before the people. I was glad when the other guys came along after. But for a while it was touch and go inside caucus. There were two solitudes inside caucus — there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing behind the scenes because Sullivan had a majority of the caucus and he was doing his best to optimize that and really put the pressure on some of the boys to come on side and make it less of a contest, but as it turned out, while he had a majority, at least we had a reasonable number to go before the microphones with. And people went with her knowing full well what her ideology was on a lot of issues.

The education issue was not front and centre at the time but it was brewing. In her capacity as party leader Verge said we could reform the education system without going the

route of the constitutional amendment. She said government had the power to effect practical change, which was what Newfoundlanders wanted, and it was eventually Clyde Wells who got into making the case for going the Constitutional route. Adopting that practical approach, she was able to get what you might call some small 'c' conservative support for her campaign. Had she been ideological at that time — as in saying 'I want a public system that is bound wholly and solely by the Canadian Human Rights Act, no hiring and firing based on religion,' she would have had a hard time building the coalition that she needed to have more than yours truly with her at the microphone.

The big thing we had lying in wait for us was that after she got the leadership, [Clyde] Wells decided to approach the [education] issue ideologically and that forced her hand and she got ideological on it and less political and less practical. And, as a result, she found herself very much on the outside of the debate subsequently after the Wells amendment went through. But when the practical realities started to work themselves out in the school designation process, all of Newfoundland and Labrador was saying Lynn Verge was right after all. At the time in her school of thought, with regard to her own position, there was no more than five or ten percent of the population [with her]. The rest were either for it or against it on various sorts of broad gut terms. She was the only one who made a fine-tuned analysis and stuck by it. But it was to her political detriment if not destruction.

There, the ideology contributed to Lynn Verge not becoming premier because by taking the position she did, she maintained her self-respect from her point of view with regard to her conscience and her long-held views on certain things. But it left her crippled

in the political theatre in Newfoundland and Labrador and immediately thereafter Wells, who had done his thing and got his constitutional amendment started, then stepped aside and [the Liberal Party] brought in [Brian] Tobin and with Tobin going up against Lynn, that was the one-two punch and there wasn't enough time to recover from the first punch. The ideological split played a big role with her because she tended to take the less conservative, more progressive approach to ideas on education and she wouldn't let go of them.

She won the leadership and the education issue proved to be very difficult, if not crippling for her. Leading up to the move the Liberals were planning with switching leaders and calling a quick election, there was a lot of grumbling among certain members of our caucus because they had supported Sullivan and their idea was at least that Sullivan would have been more practical about his approach to the education issue, and he would have voted 'No' for more political reasons and we could, as a caucus, gone through the fight, fought the good fight and even if we lost by fifty-odd to forty-odd, we would have fought the good fight together as a nice neat coherent bunch. We would have come out of it battle-seasoned and not battle-crippled. But it has since come out with the second referendum with Mr. Sullivan at the helm, that the PC caucus never really acquitted itself tremendously well in terms of this. In the end it basically became a personal thing with some members voting 'Yes,' some members voting 'No' in the referendum itself and establishing unanimity afterwards.

Lynn Verge took her stand on the education referendum to her political detriment. It was so late in the Liberal mandate, they played it smart, changed leaders midstream and just blew us out of the water because we never had a chance to recover.

I was disappointed at various times with her as a leader, especially on the education issue. I had a leadership role within caucus as chairman of the strategy committee that planned Question Period everyday in the House when she was leader. I coordinated on a daily basis, sometimes hour by hour, sometimes minute by minute with Bill Matthews, who was the House leader — who arose from the other camp — and between the two of us we ran the practical business of the caucus in the House of Assembly at the time. But in terms of Verge, I never disagreed with her ideologically at the time; the problem was a matter of leadership style and the matter of practical things to lead a caucus. What I found was that her ideology was an obstacle to her being political. In this game I became tired, as a youth, watching the federal Tories go to bed with their conscience on election night. Unless you win, you can't implement your platform. To my mind, some of her behaviour as leader should have been centred around winning. I'm not such an ideologue that I will see myself be defeated for reasons of that sort. It was difficult in the election that she led us against Brian Tobin to defend her position on many things because the education issue really crippled her in a lot of districts and a lot of members complained that her presence [in their districts during the election] as party leader was a liability at the time.

She was slow to move on certain things [like putting a staff in place]. Under ordinary circumstances, if you start early enough in a term, you can take your time and hire your staff and get who you want. The Liberals actually dropped behind us in public opinion after she was elected leader — Lynn came off the leadership in a position to win, or at least she would have put up an excellent showing in a general election. Time was the big problem we had,

we just didn't have enough time to get it all together and recoup our losses from her stand on the education issue. So my concerns at that time were practical. No matter how good a leader you are, if you can't, from your ideological point of view, bridge a certain gap then there's no way you can get the united caucus to go up against something. On the education issue we had Harvey Hodder voting for Clyde Wells and we had Lynn Verge voting against Clyde Wells for exactly the same reasons. And then you had the rest of us doing our different things in between. So, it was a very difficult piece of business.

If she had been less ideological about the whole issue, she could have taken the following position: *I have always been a firm believer in neighbourhood schools, I have always been a firm believer in hiring teachers in merit; but I now have a new role in life, I am now the party leader whose job it is to espouse the position of the caucus, and the caucus works on consensus and the consensus of caucus is overwhelmingly that we are with the 'No' side for basic reasons, not more complicated ones, so I have to change my position because I'm the leader of this tribe and this tribe's position on this issue is . . .* But she wouldn't bring herself to do that. Today everyone is saying she was right, but at the time it was politically disastrous for her. It caused all kinds of doubt about her leadership abilities, in general. We never really got to see what Lynn Verge would have been like as a premier because she was crippled on the way to the election — crippled by her ideology and her own personal sense of honesty.

Harvey Hodder - Interview October 14, 1997

My active participation in the party began in 1991-92 and it arose primarily out of the fact of the approach that Clyde Wells and the Liberals were using on municipal issues and I felt at the time that their manner of operating and decision making was not conducive to what I deemed to be a proper democratic process. It wasn't as much the fact that they wanted to have the City of Mount Pearl amalgamated with St. John's, as the methodology that was being used to promote that. The high-handed condescending manner in which they approached. I communicated this to Mr. Wells and to his Minister of Municipal Affairs, Eric Gullage, telling them that in Newfoundland if they wanted to have a series of amalgamations take place, then they should have gone out and appoint the very most respected civil servant in the province that knew municipalities — and that was Clarence Randall — to appoint him with the mandate to go out to facilitate the amalgamation process. This was ignored in favour of a big stick approach. And that big stick approach, to me, was far more to the right than I was prepared to accept. He essentially trampled on people and trampled on institutions — municipal institutions. This was the major reason why I became active at the provincial level and left municipal politics.

[Hodder says he was courted by both the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives.]

It was particularly stronger in January, 1996. I was called by a representative of cabinet, by friends of cabinet, and also by the local Liberal district association. I was even called by the candidate who was running for the Liberal Party and told that if I wished to

contest the election as a Liberal he would bow out and not run. To which my reply was that I have great difficulty doing that. In 1991 when I joined the PC Party we were at eleven percent. And I didn't join because I was assured of getting elected, I joined because we were representing a view point under Len Simms which was more humane, represented more of a pure form of democracy that was evident under Clyde Wells. I joined out of principles. They stood for things that I believed in: consultation at the local level, they had not had a history of the big stick approach to decision making. So I would not be able to accept their invitation. I said to them 'I thank you for the invitation,' however I said to them that before the last leadership convention was over I pledged my support to Lynn Verge.

In terms of philosophy Lynn Verge and I have a lot more in common than people realize. We are both to the left wing of the Conservative Party in terms of philosophy. So I had alluded to Lynn Verge that if she won the leadership I would be happy to go and be part of her team and to represent Waterford Valley.

Having said that to her, when she was trying to put forward the party the best way that she could coming up to that (1996) election, I could not in all consciousness go and do anything else. The decision to join the PCs was a significant decision. I have no doubt that I could have won Waterford Valley, probably with an even higher majority in 1996 than I did if I had run as a Liberal. But I can't do that. The PC Party had done nothing to me to make me jump ship. But let's say that in the 1995 education debate, where I had a distinctive position that was different than the majority of our caucus. If they had put a scenario forward that stated that you must toe the line or else; then that would be very different. But they

didn't. They facilitated my different view point, which I think and still think today was rather progressive of the Progressive Conservative Party.

I kind of smiled at the Liberals trying to court me because they knew I could win the district. If they knew they could win the district without me they wouldn't of courted me. So it was more opportunism on their part and for me to be part of that I would have been opportunistic. I couldn't do that.

[If Hodder was a natural member of the party's left, and he agreed with Verge on many issues, why did he support Loyola Sullivan in the leadership?]

We had two people who had distinctively different talents. Loyola Sullivan is more to the right than I am, but I was very impressed when I arrived here with this man's work habits, with his intelligence, with his ability to be able to get on well with caucus, and with his availability to new MHAs, and to facilitate their being comfortable in the new roles that they found themselves in.

It was that workaholic approach, his ability to make decisions, that attracted me to him. My perception of Lynn Verge was that she was more in tune with my philosophy, but I didn't see any kind of the decision-making strengths that Loyola represented. I opted to go with Loyola. But everyone knew that in Loyola's team — and they know today — that I represented more of a left wing of the Conservative Party.

I felt Loyola would be a better manager of all our resources. In terms of articulation and sincerity they were about the same. Lynn biggest weakness was that she would ignore her caucus — put it this way, when I arrived here Lynn Verge did not do a great deal to make

the new members welcome. She was the establishment and she certainly didn't reach out to us fellows. For example when we needed help with a question for Question Period, some members didn't get much help from her. On one occasion I remember going to her with a question I on had on education and she gave me the impression that she didn't have time for me. That happened to several other members. So it was not without logical that these members, who were kind of new at that point, wouldn't move to Lynn Verge. They felt that she wasn't helpful to them.

Some people felt that she represented the older part of the party. There was some movement in the '94, '95, '96 years to breakaway from the Peckford years within the party itself. There was some feeling that as we move on and although the Peckford years represented a great deal of success for the party, some people felt that if we were going to be successful that we would have to move away from those years; and that there was some baggage carried by all members of the Peckford era and Lynn Verge, although very open-minded in the sense that she was willing to encompass new approaches, was also part of that era. And the reason some of the newer members went with Loyola was because he represented a fresh approach.

When she became leader it very quickly confirmed for me why I didn't support her. She became leader in May and we were without a staff, she didn't make decisions. In terms of the House of Assembly, as leader you'd better make sure that your team are the people that are on the front benches. You've got to facilitate unity. My impression is that she didn't do a great deal to welcome Loyola and he wasn't embraced to suggest that we are all part of a

team. Instead, what she did was she came in and closeted herself for lengthy periods of time in her office with her door closed. Those of us who were representative of the other side were strangers in our own household. I'm sure we felt more like strangers than she intended for us to be strangers. I'm not doubting her motivation, I simply saying that there wasn't this 'welcome back, let's get on with things.'

Then she made the mistake of keeping the same house leader, keeping the same critic roles. She didn't come in and say 'I'm the leader, I'm going to make my mark on this party right away.' She kept Bill Matthews on as house leader, which caused some of her own supporters to kind of say 'why did I work so hard to support her?' So right away there were some rifts within her own ranks as well. During the summer of '95 she was very slow to make decisions about staff. So, whether it was her sense of how she wanted to achieve unity, or whether it was her sense not wanting to ruffle any feathers, she ended up doing it wrong, in my estimation.

In all fairness to her, I think she felt that where this was a two-person race and where it was so close [Verge won by just three votes] for the sake of the party it would have been much better if it had of been 100 votes in the difference. There were some caucus members within her organization that were so ungracious in victory. There was anger on both sides and this continued for a long time. There were people in caucus who never spoke to each other for months. Looking back at it right now, it's not a very happy chapter in the history of the PC Party. The party could not gel itself together after that for quite some time.

There was another mistake in the timing of the election of the party executive. The

executive was elected the Sunday morning following the Saturday evening leadership. A very big mistake. On Sunday morning there was a very deliberate attempt to shut out of the party executive anybody who was a supporter of Loyola Sullivan. So while Lynn Verge had become the leader, there was also an attempt by that group to put 'their team' in place at the executive level as well. This only added to the sense of isolation and the sense of frustration within the party, at the level of the party executive, among people who had given many years as a volunteer to the party and who were equally good PCs, only to find that as a consequence of who they supported in the leadership they were being shut out of these positions. A lot of people left the convention very upset that they had been pushed out of executive positions.

By the autumn of 1995 many of these things had been worked out and we were beginning to see more unity between the two factions at the caucus level.

Senator Gerald Ottenheimer - Interview October 27, 1996

[Senator Gerald Ottenheimer¹ has a long history with the Newfoundland and Labrador PC Party, serving as party leader and Opposition Leader during part of the Smallwood era. As a well-respected Senator, he has often provided the provincial party with timely reminders of its roots. Sources have indicated that "the Senator," was one of the few party influentials who stood firmly against the internal bickering that was working to undermine Lynn Verge's leadership. When asked directly if he had intervened, Senator Ottenheimer said he didn't want to speak publicly about the party's internal squabbles. He did say that he had continued to support Verge throughout her leadership.]

I supported Lynn Verge in the leadership convention, have a very high regard for her, know her very well and served in cabinet with her. Her leadership was typified by a deep social concern and a recognition that these social matters could only be handled within a policy of fiscal responsibility. Newfoundland, irrespective of political parties, is in some ways a very small-c conservative society. That may well have been an element that worked against her as a woman leader. Also being a small-c conservative, or traditional society, perhaps people are more used to a style of leadership which is more 'macho' in the sense of aggression, verbal aggression. It may have been also that certain traditional values, frequently felt rather than articulated, more perhaps subjective rather than objective; that these may have been at work — and may still be at work, not only in Newfoundland society, but in that element of the Newfoundland society that makes up the Progressive Conservative Party. The Conservative Party is certainly based on a coalition of interests and I think, to a large extent, the Liberal Party is as well, but, the 'coalition' aspect is more predominant in the Conservative

¹Senator Gerald Ottenheimer died January 18, 1998.

Party. And, there is no doubt that the Conservative Party, certainly when it gets support to form a government, it usually means that the coalition has been renewed and the coalition is working. It is difficult to identify all the aspects of the coalition, but some of them are the small-c conservatives who feel more comfortable with the overall approach or intellectual framework of the party. Many people who put great emphasis on the value of individual liberties, individual freedoms, individual choices, the right of people to be what they are, who are apprehensive of government intrusions into areas where government is not necessary, and people who, without necessarily articulating it, support subsidiarity — the principle that the organisation best suited to fulfil a function is that organisation or level of government which is closest to the problem; so that which can be done by a community, should be done by a community, and what can best be done by a provincial order of government is done there and only those things which a federal order of government are required to do, in fact, do it. Subsidiarity has a certain relationship to decentralization and a sharing of power. And then there are people who take a historic or generational view of politics, who are aware of responsibilities in terms of future generations. Governments are not only for the electorates of today, but also in a sense it is like a form of trust that the living set up for the yet to come. These are aspects of the coalition. A stronger emphasis on provincial identity.

I view the Conservative Party in Newfoundland and Labrador from a number of perspectives, taking the premise that there is a reasonably coherent and consistent perspective, or framework of values, which typifies the party, and which has been fairly constant for the past number of years. There is also a need to counter-balance that need by the requirement

for the Conservative Party — and every party — to update its approach in specific areas to make sure that its specific policies are contemporary and relevant to the problems of the day. The ongoing need for parties to analyze their specific policies to ensure these policies are relevant is a continuing phenomenon; whereas years ago it could have been done every number of years, in today's politics the rate of change is increasing and parties are having difficulty coping with the increase. So, on the one hand there is a consistent, coherent, identifiable core of values and approaches to socio-political issues which typifies a political party — an intellectual frame of reference, if you will. But the process of making that intellectual frame of reference specific in terms of particular issues has to be constantly revised.

You have the consistency aspect of it and the change aspect of it. I have tried to suggest that while it is obviously very important to examine those areas where change and modification of specific policies is necessary, it's also important to recognize the consistent and continuing kind of frame of reference — intellectual frame of reference — which the party has established. You can adapt to specific things without having to change your fundamental political values. Lynn Verge shared with Brian Peckford, and with other Conservatives, a realization that we in Newfoundland should, to the extent possible within a federal state, determine our own future. We should be continually conscious of our own identity as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That doesn't make us less Canadians, it isn't a negative, it isn't anti-Canadian. It's pro-Newfoundland. And also that the federal government should not intrude in matters which are very local and specific to the

Newfoundland character. I think Lynn shared that with Peckford. But I would say that that has been a sort of continuing stream within the Conservative Party. Then there are others who, while not necessarily denying those principles, attach less importance to them. There has been this theme or this idea that the order of government best suited to make decisions or to have a very large area of input into decisions is that order of government which is closest to the problem and to the people. What others have called the principle of subsidiarity. I think it has been proven to be fairly accurate. There are others in the Conservative Party who would attach less importance to that.

John Ottenheimer - Interview October 10, 1996

[John Ottenheimer, younger brother of PC Senator Gerald Ottenheimer, was a Verge supporter outside of caucus. John was elected the MHA for St. John's East in the February, 1996 election. Obviously, he was not part of the inner circle of caucus during Verge's tenure as leader, but his relationship with Verge and the Verge caucus supporters who were re-elected adds valuable insight to the way the caucus split has now played itself out after her defeat.]

The leadership convention became very divisive because there were only two candidates. If there had been three, four, five or even eight or so candidates the likelihood of fallout once the campaign is over is much less because you have so many people coming together and hopefully working around and supporting the new leader. It's very difficult when there're just two — it's an unhealthy position for any party to be in — and I think it's fair to say that we suffered as a party because when there are only two candidates the lines are drawn, it's an 'us and them' mentality — it's like a hockey game — someone has to win and someone has to lose. And, when you put all these personalities together afterwards, the result is that the formation of policy, which is the result of a caucus working together, the result is that the ability is somewhat strained. This wasn't carried out with the success that it ought to have been carried out, after a somewhat divisive leadership campaign where there was a great split amongst the existing caucus as to, number one, who ought to have won, and secondly, what the policy of the party ought to be. [The] party executive had a very limited role to play in the formation of party policy. Clearly, the provincial executive is the vehicle which drives the development of party membership and works hard to have the party grow

and develop in numbers. That is, as I see it, the primary objective of the provincial executive, but with regard to policy the provincial executive is not an elected person to the House of Assembly, they are elected from within a group of people who support a party, perhaps because of its policy. Lynn Verge brought with her to the leadership of the party a particular background and awareness and education which would have, in my view, moved the party to the left. I supported her during the leadership and that is why — if labels mean anything, I don't mind being called a Red Tory in that sense because I shared some of the concerns, which are primarily social, as opposed to economic. I suppose in that light there could be an argument that the party was moving in that direction, but to what extent it moved and how successful it was in being moved in that direction is another thing. But it was truly tested because of the split in the caucus to move party policy. Parties are leadership driven and I don't think Newfoundland is an exception to that. The success of the party is largely based on how the leader is perceived by the electorate. If Lynn's leadership had continued over a greater period of time, perhaps party policy might have been driven in that direction more successfully. But we can only speculate because she wasn't there really long enough to see where it was going and secondly, the time that she was there was perhaps pre-occupied with the fallout from what was a very divisive leadership campaign. So it really made it very difficult to nail down what we were about and where we were going and what our policy was during that period of time.

Calvin Powell - Interview October 26, 1996

The one thing I will say about Lynn Verge was that I was always included. She would call me two or three times a week and we would talk policy. I had said when I was vice-president that my understanding is that as grassroots people and then as executive, we want to be into policy making. This was not lip-service [that we wanted]. There are people who have been on the executive who had tried to become candidates and people who have become candidates. And we feel we have as much right to determine the direction of this party as those people who are elected by the people in their districts, because we, ourselves, are elected by the party, and we have to espouse the views of the party. And, what we wanted was to be in there gathering information from our district associations and getting in there and saying, with the guidance of the elected caucus and with the resources of the fifth floor²: this is the way we would like to see the party's position developed on health care, education and so forth. I had asked to become part of caucus meetings and I was told "No, that was just not the right thing to do." And immediately another division came up and it was the 'we-they' and it was very clear that they [caucus members] wanted to remain the powerful people who ultimately made the decisions. Lip-service was given and that was it. But with Lynn Verge, at least I could communicate to her. I would try to bring her the views [of the executive] that were said and at the end of the day, when she would be making statements, some of the views that I had mentioned to her were included.

²The PC Opposition offices, including the MHA's offices, secretarial, research and public relations staff, are located on the fifth floor of Confederation Building in St. John's.

In recent times, since the election [and since the departure of Verge from the party leadership] the truth of the matter is that the executive has gone one way in terms of trying to do something about this and the fifth floor has gone the other way. There has been no true communication between leader and president, and that has been very sad. The team that I had supported in Port de Grave just expanded to the whole Avalon and we felt that there could be, within the confines of Newfoundland, resistance to a woman in power. We had been through the Kim Campbell fiasco and it was felt by the group involved that there were circumstances set up to trip her [Campbell]. We felt that we could set an example in Newfoundland. But when we started to move forward with our position for that, resistance and barriers came up pretty fast — her past history [and] some of the objectives that she had achieved when she was in government. And her association with certain feminist groups, her views and so forth. It was said to us that perhaps we should give more consideration to the overall best interest of the party in the long term. But that only strengthened our determination more because we felt that we had a cause and that we now really wanted to work hard. When we went to the convention, we really felt at that time strong opposition to our position. There was probably about a dozen to a dozen and a half of us who were constantly bombarded by individuals who were saying that this was not right, this was wrong what we were doing and so forth, and that if the party was to continue going in the direction that it should of forming government then your only chance was to support Loyola [Sullivan].

Paul Shelley - Interview October 26, 1996

[Baie Verte MHA Paul Shelley was another of Lynn Verge's caucus supporters. Shelley is a young man who, according to his own assessment, represents the new breed of Progressive Conservative. For him, the caucus split that erupted following the Verge-Sullivan leadership race is now healed.]

When I came in to run as a Tory, I was basically running Tory because I didn't like the Wells regime and what was happening. So I was really running anti-government. When I hear of different factions within the party now it doesn't even dawn on me. All I know is that the group that I'm working with now — the nine, or the 16 before the last election, we get together as individuals and come up with our own philosophies, and basically what I'd like to see for the PC Party that I'm involved in now, because I think it's different than the one I was involved in before the last election, is the middle of the road — a balance — of what people are crying out for, which is less government.

But the reason the caucus was split was over the gender issue. Some caucus members could not see supporters, particularly long-time party supporters, staying loyal to a party led by a woman. The major problem for the party was the fact the campaign was simply a two-person race and before the competing camps got out of the starting gates there was division.

The answer to our last leadership was to have a third person running. But because there was only two people, the issue of Lynn being a woman rose to the forefront for some people. And once you lose in a leadership of two people, you're going to have a hard time hauling back those other people and there's still the feeling there, deep within. But the attitude right now, over just six short months is that the Tobin-syndrome has made all of us

[nine PC caucus members] more determined than ever to sell our own philosophies and to go on to win the government even more than it was the first time.

[For Paul Shelley, like many of his caucus colleagues, the business of developing party policy is the sole domain of the elected caucus. He suggests that with the change in the faces around the caucus table, there is a need to have another look at the policies of the party; a need that must consider the ideas of 'new generation' Tories.]

There is a new group, a new face on the PC Party, and we have to develop a new philosophy that grows out of this newness. There's a new frustration within the younger generation of the party, which I consider myself to be a part of, saying that we are going to set our own agenda. We're not going to deal with a philosophy of the Tories of the '70s or '80s. We've watched this for years. We want to become part of it, but we want to have our say in this party.

And because the caucus sets the party's agenda, we've got to be a part of the caucus. Party policy and party platform all come from the caucus. They listen to the party's executive council and to the party's youth, but ultimately, it is the caucus that sets the agenda, and the caucus has the final say.

Loyola Sullivan - Interview October 10, 1996

We had given away the political right to Clyde Wells and I wanted the party to work to win it back. We're living in a province where there's a lot of social hazards so we've really got to do our balancing in this province. In Alberta and Ontario they can be more extreme because they've got the ability to see a better day in four years time or five years time. We don't have the flexibility, no matter how tough we get, to see a better day in this province in five or ten years time. We're not going to come from a have-not province, where we are now, and try to sell us as a have-province in the rest of my lifetime. That is not going to happen, despite what the Liberals have been saying, that is just not going to happen. Our Gross Domestic Product, our basic unemployment rate — just marginal gains, and it would take decades to get us back to just the mid-point in Canada. But we have to start moving there and shifting our thinking as a party. A lot of caucus agree with my view. Even before the leadership, the majority of caucus members saw my views as being more representative of our party and represented more of an opportunity for our party, over the long-term, to get back [in government]. I think I represented more of what the party is and where the party has to go. Some people around the province might have supported Lynn Verge because she had a much higher name recognition than me and thought she would be better able to lead the party to victory. Some of the people who supported her for that reason have since indicated to me that in retrospect she did not articulate the certain basic philosophies that the PC Party has traditionally stood for. Lynn Verge's vision of the party was perceived as being all over the place.

That hurt us [the party] in that regard. I think I have accomplished getting people to see our way of thinking of where we need to be. That's something that, as leader, I have told our people that we will be in full gear to develop our policies at the end of year two. When year three starts we are going to be ready to go with our message and we'll have our ground work and our organization all in place.

I believe that the reason the majority of the caucus supported me was because I more closely represented what the PC Party stood for. I feel that I fit the party's ideology and philosophy, probably more so than our more recent leaders, at least I feel I do. I come from a business background, but I've worked in the social areas too; I've been in health and education and I feel I have a pretty strong social conscience, but I'm a strong believer [that] the engine that's going to drive this province has to be based on common sense and economics and that's got to dictate what social policies we adopt, rather than the other way around. We need some strong right-of-centre policies if we are to continue to attract voters. I see our major task as we've relinquished a right-wing agenda and we've gone more to the left. And that's not our ideology. I feel we have to be to the right-of-centre. I think we've always been that, that's the perception of the Progressive Conservative Party — our basic philosophies and our views and we need to move back there.

[Loyola Sullivan made reference to a May, 1996, Corporate Research poll which reported that if an election were held at that time, thirty-seven percent of decided voters would vote PC, and a September, 1996, poll which suggested thirty-nine percent of decided voters would vote PC.]

These numbers, which are the highest numbers for the party since 1989, indicate more

These numbers, which are the highest numbers for the party since 1989, indicate more people are taking a serious look at us in the PC Party, and that the electorate was more comfortable with our return to the politics they had grown accustomed to. I think the perception of the people out there was that the PC Party [during Verge's leadership] was all over the place — all over the map, and that there wasn't any specific engine that controlled that machine. I think we need to have more of a nuclear type of a party that emanates from us [the caucus], and not everybody doing their own thing. A lot of people today are certainly captives to the electorate, and people have a tendency to say whatever is best for the electorate, the people who are going to re-elect them, and that has a tendency to break down party structure and direction. I think we need to have sound, economic-based policies. I feel that job creation within small business is the main thing that's going to drive the economy, and we can only have social programs depending on how the economic sector performs, not at the expense of the business sector. The priorities have got to be in order because we can't have a normally functioning province unless we've got our economic house in order. That's got to be number one. We [the PC Party] probably drifted from that.

As I went through my leadership campaign I didn't find any rifts developing or anything long lasting during the Sullivan/Verge campaign. I found remnants of the 1989 campaign popped up from time to time. And that annoyed me to know that there were differences after six years in the party when I've always viewed things as you go in, you work at it and when it's over, it's over.

Lynn Verge - Interview April 9, 1997

Maybe more than a lot of other people — because I've spent a lot of my life thinking about it — I knew I was breaking new ground. During the years that I served as an MHA, the public went some distance in accepting a woman in politics — a woman as a rank-and-file MHA, a woman as a cabinet minister, albeit, perhaps, a token woman in the sense that people might have reached the point where they thought any well-rounded cabinet not only should have somebody from Labrador and somebody from western and central Newfoundland but also at least one woman. But a woman leader and potentially a woman premier was a new and different hurdle that was more than a considerable number of people could surmount. I choose to take a positive interpretation of it. Among the voting population at large just about forty percent voted PC. Now, there would have been a variety of factors at play, but I think it represents a certain amount of progress. And I do still believe that the potential was there, despite the intrigue which was there within the party. If it hadn't been for the Liberals having Brian Tobin with the national press corps serving as cheerleaders, if the Liberals had continued with Clyde Wells, or they had a divisive leadership succession along the lines of what happened with the PCs in 1989, then perhaps even with the unconscious reluctance or deliberate prejudice of the voters or people within the party that it could have happened, that I could have led the PCs to victory. I didn't have to compete for the nomination. And that's how a lot of women in the last twenty-five years got there. They were probably set up to be sacrificial lambs and there was a swing during the campaign and the next thing, to everyone's surprise they ended up getting elected. Some things have changed in the eighteen years since

I was first elected. I've maintained for a long time that the general population is much more open to advances and change than [are] institutions in society, because institutions are always dominated by people with vested interests. Institutions involve hierarchies — people with power and people without power. And the people dominating the institutions like it the way they've got it so they resist change. Political parties tend to lag behind the voters, union executives lag behind the rank and file membership, clergy lag behind the laity, and so on. It seems to me that in politics, getting a party nomination is a bigger hurdle for women than winning the election. Getting the party nomination involves a woman first of all deciding that she's going to do it. It's an unconventional choice. It involves risk, it involves getting into a sphere that has a very bad reputation and a lot of women, and some men, too, I suppose, never get beyond their own mental hurdle, and if they do then often when it's perceived that the party has a chance of winning they often have to compete against people who've been cosy with or have been close with the dominant players, who've given them the advantage of advance information or encouragement or contacts or campaigning. I think parties have evolved now to a point where leaders understand that it's politically expedient to have a few women. Not half, but a few. In the last provincial election, I'd like to think, at least in part because I was there leading the opposition, Brian Tobin and the Liberals went after prominent women for nominations in seats that were winnable for the Liberals and they ended up getting seven elected. Whereas if it hadn't been for women's work over the last twenty years, he undoubtedly would have functioned the way Don Jamieson functioned or the way Joey Smallwood had functioned.

I had been very actively involved in the women's movement from the start of the Corner Brook Status of Women's Council in 1974, which was a year or so after I had returned to Corner Brook to practise law. A woman who was my mother's contemporary called out of the blue sometime in 1974 and said that she was inviting me and a few other women to start a Corner Brook women's council. This was fairly soon after the release of the federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women report, and I was delighted. I suppose because of my reading and my thinking I was more than ready for that kind of involvement. From then on, I was very active in the women's movement. And what it gave me was an outlet for my own thinking, the benefit of hearing other women's thoughts and experiences, so that we went through a process of discovery and learning and sharing.

In an organized way we studied issues. We had people knowledgeable in various issues we were interested in come and meet with our group or give speeches to public meetings we had. And then we moved into political action. We set about lobbying for various government policies, programs and we had a list of goals and through that I met some of the politicians. In particular, I met Brian Peckford, who was the only one on the provincial scene who really impressed me and everything happened quickly. That happened to be the fall of 1978. Part of our women's groups activities during those years was an attempt to recruit women to run for public office — for city council, school boards, and the hospital board, the Western Memorial Hospital Board had some elected positions at that time. All of those opportunities came up and I was involved with other women in some cases as part of the group and in other cases really as a private effort off to the side, talking to women saying 'you'd be good for that,

why don't you run?" and occasionally we'd have a woman go for it, more or less eagerly, and we'd do what we could to get people out to vote. It was fairly hard to find women who were willing to run. And at some point during all that, a couple of my friends said "why don't you run?" and that's probably what got me started thinking about it. I would have regarded myself as a natural campaign worker, like a campaign manager, and that's where I thought my own strength lay. I really never thought of myself as a politician or candidate. The Peckford leadership was quite exhilarating. Ann Bell and I worked together to become delegates and we weren't exactly appreciated by the small group of regular PCs in the Humber East riding. They weren't really very active and held an annual meeting and election of officers every year or every two years. I remember going to one meeting in which they had a hard time rounding up enough for an executive. I was asked to be secretary, probably because I was a woman, and I declined. We managed to get ourselves elected delegates with a bit of work and then that spring I started thinking of the possibility of actually running. In all honesty if anyone else had sought the nomination I'm not at all sure I would have even competed for it, it wouldn't have been hard to talk me out of it. But with Don Jamieson returning to lead the Liberals, it seemed to me that most of the active PCs [in Humber East] really didn't expect our party to win the election. And I'd say some of them doubted we could win the seat. There was a lot of talk of Clyde Wells running for the Liberals in Humber East then. I didn't care who it would be. I thought Brian Peckford was great, I liked what he stood for, I liked his energy. I had been pushing for matrimonial property law reform during the leadership process and he immediately introduced a bill. It undoubtedly had been worked up before he became

premier, but he introduced it immediately after the convention and Cabot Martin, who worked for him, called me in Corner Brook and asked me to come into St. John's to meet with him to critique it. So I felt really good about the new administration.

Now, I had no expectation of being in the cabinet. I hadn't even thought of that possibility. Bob [her husband] had raised it with me, but I had said 'no.' I thought if I was a Member of the House of Assembly that I'd be able to work on the inside on the issues that I had been working on from the outside and that by having me on the inside and all the people on the outside that we could get things done. I didn't have anything to lose. I certainly wasn't taking it for granted.

Tom Farrell, a cabinet minister in the Frank Moores government, had held the Humber East seat and Moores himself had held the neighbouring seat of Humber West. When both decided not to run, the west coast ridings were up for grabs. Both Farrell and Moores disappointed a lot of people in the Corner Brook area because they really didn't pay too much attention to their districts. The Liberals went through a hotly-contested candidate selection process for the Humber East district, with [Corner Brook businessman] George Colbourne winning.

Getting the PC nomination by acclamation gave me an advantage over the Liberal competitor. The Liberals lost a week doing their run-off and when I got the nomination by acclamation, I was out knocking on doors the next day and the troops really rallied. Those who had been involved all along with Farrell and Moores and others joined in. Lorne Wheeler became my campaign manager and we really put a good team together.

Lorne Wheeler had been thinking about the nomination, but decided against it. If he had decided to run, I would have stepped aside. But I had my own reasons for running. I had a positive reason for running. I would have been satisfied to end up as a backbench member with the PCs winning the government, or if we lost the election, and I had won, sitting as an opposition member. I was pretty unsophisticated. I had no thought of being in the cabinet. And, if I had lost that would have just been three weeks away from law practice, life would have gone on. It wouldn't have been a big deal. There was a big sweep in public opinion a week or ten days into the campaign and I got in on Peckford's coattails by quite a big margin. And towards the end of the campaign Peckford put out a release saying that he would have a woman in his cabinet. So people started saying to me that I might be in the cabinet.

[Lynn Verge defends her decision to appoint Bill Matthews opposition house leader. He had held the position before Verge became leader. But because of his vigorous work to defeat her, why would she appointed him to the position again?]

I honestly felt that he was the best caucus member for that job. And it seemed to me to be a happy coincidence that he probably would be the most important member of caucus given his stature within the group to have on my side, to try to meld the group. He had supported Loyola Sullivan although I had the impression at that time that he didn't have anything in particular against me. In retrospect, perhaps what he had against me was that I am female. But we'd always had a good relationship.

[During the summer months of 1995 Lynn Verge took a stand on the education

reform issue which caused some problems for her caucus colleagues. Premier Clyde Wells had called a province-wide referendum on the denominational school issue, with the vote to take place September 5, 1995. Verge came out with a controversial stand on the question — a stand that didn't win support within her own caucus.]

There were members of caucus which represented districts with a high percentage of Catholic and/or Pentecostal voters, who wanted to embrace the Catholic and Pentecostal No Campaign totally, and there were others who wanted to stay out of it or who wanted to position themselves for either outcome and some of the caucus, and I was one of them, supported bringing together schools and having children grouped by geographic area, although I don't think any of us opposed — I certainly didn't — the option of continuing optional religious education. At any rate, I was called upon as a political leader to make public my own personal choice in the referendum and my position and my reasons were, admittedly, very difficult for people to understand. It seemed to me that a lot of the caucus who wanted a No vote were relieved that I voted No, but of course my reasons were very different from the reasons of the Catholic and Pentecostal church leaders. I took quite a beating, who knows how it filtered out a month or two later, but at the time the news media and the commentators behaved like a mindless herd and it was appalling what little critical thought went into that whole exercise and the reporters and commentators seemed to emotionally respond to what they heard Chris Decker and Clyde Wells saying and I don't think they ever stopped to read the text of the constitutional amendment or realized that what counts with a constitutional amendment is the wording. What the premier or the minister of education says on television isn't going to be looked at by the Supreme Court of Canada in

the event of a later challenge of some new legislation or administrative practice. That caused some problems within caucus, particularly among those whose constituents voted No heavily. But we got through that. I suffered some damage because of it and some of the reporters created the impression that I was insincere in my approach, which I think was the most damaging criticism of all.

I can remember it was the third week in November, the House was sitting and Liberal members were heckling one afternoon. Danny Dumaesque [a Liberal backbench MHA] and a couple of others were shouting across that we and I had dropped like lead balloons in [the Decima] poll that had just been done. And that, believe it or not, spooked some of the caucus. Now it was about a week later that the poll actually came out and the poll certainly wasn't anything like the Liberal hecklers led our guys to believe, but they were spooked and they behaved in a very politically immature and undisciplined way. I suspect that before that and certainly during that and after that, members of caucus were very blatantly undermining me by talking "off the record" to [CBC Television legislative reporter] Doug Letto and other reporters. There was major self-inflicted damage by then. I was pretty sure that was going on during the reporting of the poll. The CBC Morning Show did a commentary about goings on in our caucus which had to come from the caucus, there was too much detail for them to have got it any other way. I was pretty sure of at least one member of caucus who had fed it all to Peter Gullage [a writer/broadcaster with The Morning Show] and curiously I was the only member of caucus who thought that there might be a spring election. The rest of them, for whatever reason, thought that there wouldn't be an election until at least the fall, if not the

spring of 1997. And I think I was the only one who seriously thought that Brian Tobin might become the next Liberal leader.

I remember in early December, partly in response to some of the caucus panic, but largely because of my own belief that we were looking at an early election in 1996, I tried to accelerate the policy development process. I put together a crack team with a tight deadline that included members of caucus and people from outside caucus and I remember we met in early December and they all agreed to a time frame that would see a draft by the end of January, with February allowed for caucus to work it around and it was supposed to be finalized by the second or third week of March to take to a convention — the party's provincial convention was supposed to be around the end of April — I was thinking that we might be looking at Clyde Wells resigning in January, a competitive Liberal leadership convention some time around March and an election in April to June time frame.

The behaviour of some of the members of caucus in those weeks in November shocked even themselves. We closed for Christmas it seemed to me, with people somewhat subdued. And then during the Christmas holidays everything started to unfold. I went into election mode before New Year's Eve. I remember going to a drug store in Corner Brook a couple of days after Christmas and running into Jodine Tobin [Brian Tobin's wife] who said that she and Brian and their children had arrived an hour earlier for a vacation, and I immediately knew something was up because they had never, ever come to Corner Brook Christmas time before.

I called [caucus member] Rick Woodford that evening and told him about my

suspicions. Everyone had to scramble to save his or her own skin. By then they knew that it was too late. But there were a few surprises. The biggest surprise for me was, of course, Rick defecting, and the other was that Fabian Manning was behaving for a week or so as though he was wobbly, and I didn't expect any of that. The ones who stayed with the PCs had to support my leadership, that's all they had or could have.

I was disappointed that Bill Matthews was not very helpful during the campaign, even though I had asked him to co-chair it. It's very hard for me to explain what might have motivated some of those people. I know Bill made a major change in his personal life during those months. He left his wife and he displayed — I can't think of another verb to describe it — a relationship with another woman from his district that caused a scandal in his district. Around the time that he publicly made this change he told me about it and he also told me that he doubted that he would run in the next election. I believe that the main reason why he didn't run was that he didn't think he would get re-elected, and that he had come to this conclusion long before Brian Tobin came on the provincial scene. In retrospect I don't think Bill Matthews was ever comfortable with me as leader. Probably, mainly because I am a woman. That's what I believe. I didn't immediately see the connection between the erratic behaviour of Bill Matthews and the plot to undermine my leadership because I didn't put much stock into the ability of these people to successfully conspire against me or anyone else. I still find it hard to believe that Bill's behaviour was consciously calculated to take me out of the leadership position and to put Loyola Sullivan in. Undoubtedly there was a lot going on that I didn't witness and that I might not have guessed was happening. Loyola didn't seem

to me to be all that impressive in caucus meetings. Frequently he'd bombard people with words and with discussion of details. He'd describe all the trees but he wouldn't seem to have a concept of the woods. I really didn't sense that he was inspiring members of caucus. In fact, more than once at a caucus meeting it seemed to me that he was turning people off.

[However, following the executive council meeting of the party in October, it became clearer to Verge that something was being cooked up. The executive council of the party is made up of the provincial party executive, the fifty-two district presidents or their representatives, the caucus, former members of caucus and candidates of record. It is the major representative body of the key people in the party. The executive council met on the Sunday of a weekend in late October, 1995 in St. John's, following a well-attended policy conference which had been held on the Saturday. The account of how Lynn Verge became aware of the plot to undermine her — which was set in motion during the executive council meeting — and how she reacted to it, provides valuable insight into how she was handicapped by her own party going into the provincial election that was called just three months later.]

I was at the head table next to party president Cal Powell and I think Cal really didn't do a crisp job of setting an agenda and keeping people on track. Part of the routine was a treasurer's report. The treasurer, Randy Dawe, who always seemed to be out to lunch, gave his treasurer's report. A member of the executive council questioned something in the report — it was a straightforward question — and this led to an eruption on Randy's part as he said in an emotional way that the books were being kept by the leader's staff, so he really didn't have them in his possession. The matter of where the party's books were kept was a matter that was never in question. It was never an item of controversy until Randy became treasurer. Always before the books were kept in St. John's where all the party records were, at head office. Probably for the most part in the past, the treasurer had lived in or near St. John's. When Randy became treasurer at first he wanted to have the books at his place in Bay

Roberts, and he seemed to view his role as treasurer to be a bookkeeping job. So after this was thrashed about and after I arranged to have the party auditor, who is a chartered accountant, to meet with him, I thought we had an understanding that the menial day-to-day bookkeeping work and the fetching of the mail and the bank deposit would be done by somebody in St. John's close to me for the sake of regularity and continuity and Randy would have reports as often as he wanted and full access. But his role would be a higher level function — one of managing the party's finances and of developing a plan for controlling expenditures and raising revenue. There were ongoing difficulties with Randy and he did erupt at the meeting, blurting out that he was the treasurer but he didn't have the books. What was questioned was John Laschinger's arrangement. The first person to bring it up was Robert Lundrigan, and to be perfectly honest I didn't realize what he was hinting at first, I think it was after the meeting when I realized the inferences he was making, because what he was hinting at was that I hadn't fully paid John Laschinger, intimating — although he didn't do it explicitly enough for me to grasp until later — that I had abused my position as party leader by having the party enter into an arrangement with John Laschinger that involved essentially using party funds to pay John Laschinger for work that he had done on my leadership campaign. In fact, my leadership campaign had raised money, and this is all documented, which fully covered John Laschinger's fees. That was finished business by the time I became leader and with the party president and the full executive I had the party enter into an arrangement with John Laschinger to give us advice on planning for the next election, on developing a plan to prepare ourselves for the next election and on re-organizing our

publicly-funded opposition staff and then, in particular, on winning the Grand Falls by election, which took place in the spring and then the Gander by election which took place in the fall. The work that we had John Laschinger do included personal services provided by John himself, a trip to the province to run focus groups, and a written report setting out his findings and his recommendations and a draft outline of an election preparation plan. In an effort to try to involve the key players and make them feel valued and happy about all of this, I arranged for Cal Powell, the provincial president, and Bill Matthews, with the expectation that Bill would chair the election preparation committee, to spend a weekend with John Laschinger in Toronto in the final week of the Ontario campaign. And through John they spent time at Ontario PC campaign headquarters and talked to and observed the key strategists in that victory — as it turned out. And when Bill Matthews returned to the next caucus meeting (in early June) he was floating, he was behaving as though he was floating on a cloud. He was enthralled by this experience. He was really excited. And I felt at that point that the caucus was becoming cohesive. Then we won the by election in Grand Falls. Mike Mackay won in Grand Falls by a big margin. Len Simms was very helpful in that campaign and Len Simms was a very positive factor. He had left a positive legacy for the party. We should have won Gander, but the organization didn't quite do it. That came much later in early October.

I felt ambushed, partly because I honestly hadn't heard anyone suggest such a thing (before the meeting) and it certainly was never in my mind, because as far as I was concerned we had done a fantastic job of paying all my leadership campaign bills promptly

and that was past history. I was completely taken by surprise. I didn't even realize what was being hinted at. It wasn't until later that it really dawned on me that what they were really getting at was that I was having the party pay party funds to look after a leadership debt. All I was guessing at the time was that there were people who didn't like John Laschinger, either because he was from Ontario, or because he had worked on my leadership. When the meeting started getting out of control, when Randy erupted — which shouldn't have been a surprise because he did it every executive meeting — at some point Gerry Ottenheimer and a couple of others spoke up in a helpful way to put things in perspective, but when Robert Lundrigan, Martin Hammond from Kilbride district, and Larry Vaters from the youth federation started on John Laschinger, Cal didn't step in to take control and I was left as leader to try to deal with what was being said. Looking back at the session, even a few hours later, I realized that there had been an organized strategy on the part of two or more people to ambush me — it's hard to say how many and who were part of it — but I do believe that the people who spoke up had been primed. I could have squat Larry Vaters, because he knew the difference, but whether or not he was bright enough to have understood, I don't know, he had sat in on the meetings of the executive when the issues about John Laschinger were discussed and approved. The term 'conspiracy' suggests to me something planned, deliberate and co-ordinated. From what I've observed over the years, most people aren't industrious enough or bright enough to do the organization. But what I do think happened after this leadership, and it happened after the '89 Rideout-Simms leadership and the '79 Peckford

leadership, was a continuation of camps.³

Because the '95 leadership was so long (almost three and a half months — twice as long as the other two leadership contests) and because the competition was so nasty towards the end and some of the nastiness became publicized, which made it even worse, and because the result was so close, seems to me the division might had been more pronounced. And where I was only leader of the opposition, I really didn't have the power or the tools to bring to an end more pronounced resistance that Brian Peckford would have had as premier. There may well have been other factors, too; aspects of my behaviour, my function as leader which I'm not even aware of which exacerbates the situation. In the years that followed '79, even with Peckford's strength, and even with Doody bowing out, I could sense remnants of the Doody campaign and the Peckford campaign. And a lot of the Doody people supported Len Simms in '89 and supported Loyola Sullivan in '95. And a lot of the people who supported Peckford in '79, supported Tom Rideout in '89 and supported me in '95. I don't think what happened after the '95 leadership was a marked departure, it was a matter of degree, but it was more of the same. The Sullivan camp probably continued in various ways, overt or subtle. And when Loyola became leader after my defeat last March, from what I'm told, he hasn't said this to me, but other people claim to have been told by him and people working for him that his main mission and his staff's main mission was to put his people on district executives — in other words to stack the next convention and the one that's scheduled for

³The term "camps" within political parties refers to the internal grouping of individuals within the party to promote a particular candidate or policy.

Gander next April, to protect him from a leadership challenge. They haven't made any secret about that, in fact they've been quite blatant about it.

To put it into context, I went through two other provincial PC leadership contests, the '79 one, which was very soon after my active involvement with the provincial PCs — I had never been involved with any other party — but prior to late 1978, while I had a lively interest in politics and watched, I wasn't actively involved with the party. I went to the '79 leadership as a delegate supporting Brian Peckford. I had to compete in Humber East for a voting delegate position, and I was one of a relatively small minority of Corner Brook area delegates who supported Brian Peckford. By far the majority of delegates from that area supported Bill Doody. And then I went through the 1989 leadership when I supported Tom Rideout, and then the third leadership in 1995 when I was a candidate myself.

After '79, the people who supported Doody were relatively slow to accept Peckford's victory. But what I think brought about apparent cohesion was first of all the fact that Bill Doody bowed out of provincial politics [and was named to the Senate] soon after that leadership, and secondly, Brian Peckford's success in the election that fall was by far the most important development. The leadership convention was in March and the election was in June and immediately after the leadership Peckford tried to integrate all camps and gave cabinet positions to Bill Doody and the others who had run for the leadership. He didn't give his competitors a chance to complain about being dropped or shunned. Very, very quickly after the leadership he called an election, and right after the election call, when Don Jamieson came back, a lot of people thought he [Peckford] would go down in flames. In fact he won. And

his main challengers, Bill Doody included, decided not to seek re-election and in fact bowed out, leaving most of the field to Peckford and with his victory, he had power. While he was premier from the outset [because he succeeded Frank Moores who had retired from politics], Peckford now had his own mandate within three months and his opponents and detractors [within the party] really didn't have anywhere to go. If they wanted to be part of the government and part of the party, they had to at least pretend to support Brian Peckford. And I realized, noticing various subtle behaviours and comments that some of the people who had supported Doody were very, very slow to embrace Peckford, and I don't know if some of them ever really did. During all those years periodically something would happen to remind me that there was still a Doody faction and a Peckford faction. Because Peckford had power within the party, he was able to provide a more cohesive leadership.

[Has her experience as leader affected the way Lynn Verge thinks about public life?]

Following the party's defeat in the 1996 provincial election I recognized as soon as the election results came out that my time as leader was very limited. The most I could hope for was that miraculously the recount would result in an upset [of the original result], but I knew the odds were very much against that. Or that a controverted elections application might overturn the result and then I'd win my seat. And I would stay on as leader on a caretaker, interim basis to attend to business and give people a chance to adjust before putting the party through another leadership process. The party just couldn't take another competitive leadership that early. That was the most that I could imagine. I knew for a long time that there were a lot of people in the party and the caucus who really didn't feel any

warmth towards me, but I thought they were practical enough to want to use me enough as long as I was riding high in the polls, or even after Brian Tobin's victory to tie up loose ends from the election and try to lead us through a smooth transition. I don't think this experience has changed me as a person. The worst part of it for me was what happened in the fall, when I knew that people were undermining. But I understood the necessity of appearing united and putting on a happy face. That was very difficult. The behaviour of people who had opposed me for the leadership wasn't particularly difficult to take, it might have been disappointing; but what was very hard to take was the behaviour of Alvin Hewlett, who had supported me quite heartily. Alvin is one of the most negative people who I've ever worked with, but it's a reflection of his own insecurities. I saw Alvin succumb to the negative forces around the caucus. He kept running to me, telling me about all the negativity and I'm a person who functions best when I have positive influences around me, when I have people near me who give me energy. There are various ways in which you can process reality. There are some people who can take a challenge and regard it as a challenge and concentrate on what has to be done to meet the challenge and even have some fun working at it. And then there are other people who present you with an unsurmountable problem and moan and groan incessantly about how impossible it is to beat. And I function best when I have at least some people around me who take the positive approach and who energize me — like Lorne Wheeler, it was a terrible loss that Lorne retired before I became leader, although he still contributed. He was basically only a phone call away and any time I asked him to come and meet with me face-to-face or any time I asked him to come and chat with the caucus as a

group or individual members, he didn't hesitate. But not having him in the office daily was a terrible loss. Lorne was constantly reassuring Alvin or other people who were moaning and groaning and expressing doubts and seeing the worst. But without Lorne and even Alvin, who had been my ally, getting drowned in this chorus of negativity, I found it difficult to keep going.

[To Lynn Verge, it was also unthinkable for party members to undermine other party members or squabble in public. She described the actions of some of her caucus colleagues as "unprofessional" — particularly for a party member to publicly undermine the party leader. That is precisely what happened when two caucus members went public in a CBC Television interview just after the election loss.]

What Ed Byrne and Roger Fitzgerald did on TV really shocked me, but in a curious way I sensed a certain relief because their undermining had been made public. Things are always easier to deal with when they're out in the open. But I was still blown away by their stupidity and I still can't understand it because my days were very numbered and they didn't have to do that. I'm just amazed at it. That afternoon [of the Tuesday following the election on Thursday] Tom Marshall [her lawyer] in Corner Brook had got the date set for the recount, which was less than a week away. So, once I got the date I put out a news release of two sentences. I didn't think there was much chance that the recount would change the result, I thought maybe a ten percent chance. The news release went out at mid-day and the caucus were told when I met with those of them who were around on a one-on-one basis. Ed Byrne had been in my office that morning and I had told him before the release went out. Around mid-afternoon, Ed came in to see me and he was holding the news release. He was very nasty. It was the only real bit of nastiness since the election. And he asked me in a

rather pointed way 'what this was all about?' Now I had already told him in the morning that I was going to have the recount done. I remember he was holding the release and he asked me 'how long are we going to have to wait to find out about this, we've got work to do, the House of Assembly is opening in two or three weeks?' And I said, 'Ed, it's less than a week and the recount would take perhaps two days. And then he said that Doug Letto had called asking him to do an interview about this. And I said to him, 'Ed, please yourself, but if I were you, I'd wait until the recount was over, it's only a week.' He really annoyed me with the way he spoke. He left and a member of the staff who was in the TV room told me later that when the news came on apparently Ed rushed out looking positively, as if expecting to see himself on TV — as if he was going to see something that would please him. I never did see the interview. But later that night all hell broke loose. A friend told me and then the phone started to ring. I never saw it and it's probably just as well. I went through with the recount, which curiously was almost therapeutic.

When I did resign it was almost a relief to get out of there. The way I took it came naturally. It's not something I had planned for. I honestly didn't expect to lose Humber East. The campaign people didn't tell me about the polling that had been done which showed that I was neck and neck, and losing the seat was a big surprise on election night. When I went on television we didn't have the count from the special polls, but I had a pretty good idea that we weren't going to win the university, which was the big special poll. If my total focus had been Humber East, the way it had been in other elections and I had lost, it would have killed

me, but my focus was on the entire province and my own seat was really secondary and I suppose that was reflected in the result.

APPENDIX B

THREE INCIDENTS

WHICH OCCURRED

DURING THE LEADERSHIP DELEGATE SELECTION PROCESS

Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador

1995

Appendix B examines three separate incidents, two of which surfaced publicly during the delegation selection process and one which did not become public.

The Fogo Incident

The most public, and perhaps the worst, of these incidents occurred at the delegate selection meeting on Fogo Island, when young people (most of whom were no more than 14) were enticed to vote for the Sullivan slate by an offer of a voucher of free Chinese food from the local take-out. In order to receive a voucher for the free food (at a value of \$10.00) voters at the Fogo Island delegate selection meeting were required to show their completed ballots to one of the two youth delegates for the Sullivan slate, who were strategically located next to the two ballot boxes in the room. Despite efforts by Verge supporters to have Sam Winsor, the chairman of the meeting, stop this violation of the secret ballot, the showing of ballots continued as Winsor refused to intervene.

Later that evening, when Verge was informed of what had gone on, she immediately launched a protest with the rules committee of the party, and wrote her own news release to announce that she had done so, as her media consultant was on Fogo Island and witnessed the event. A hearing was held in the office of the Opposition leader in Confederation Building, with both camps represented by lawyers — Valerie Marshall and Michael McNicholas for the Verge camp and Tom Williams for the Sullivan camp. The rules committee of chairman Warren Babb and members Kent Morris and Randy Hiscock,

deliberated for several days following the hearing before reaching their decision. They issued a news release stating that they had overturned the results of the Fogo Island portion of the delegate selection process for the district of Fogo [a second meeting was held the following week in Carmenville when the final six delegates were selected to represent Fogo district at the convention]. The ruling meant the five delegates elected on the Fogo Island side of the district could not attend the convention. [The six elected at the Carmenville meeting were permitted to attend the convention]. Verge therefore requested the party executive to allow the candidates who had been denied the opportunity to be delegates [and who she knew had supported her because of the slating] to attend the convention. However, without providing any explanation, the party executive ruled that no delegates from the Fogo Island portion of the district would be permitted to attend the convention.

It is not clear whether Loyola Sullivan was aware of the tactic to win delegate support from young people on Fogo Island with vouchers for Chinese food, but it is likely that he did. He personally visited the island the day before, but left early the day of the delegate selection meeting [which was held in the evening] to catch the Fogo Island ferry to return to St. John's. The two key Sullivan campaign organizers who were at the meeting were Bill Welsh and Alec Snow. Welsh was a party veteran and backroom worker for many election campaigns at both the federal and provincial levels and Snow was the Tory MHA for Menihek and one of Sullivan's nine caucus supporters. Both were asked to intervene and stop the showing of ballots, but both refused, with Welsh saying that there was nothing wrong with what was going on. It was clear before the voting process started that Welsh and Snow had

orchestrated the affair, with Welsh counselling the two youth representatives on what to do. The Chinese food voucher scheme was, in fact, quite intricate. The vouchers were stamped on the back by the local bank, proving to the owner of the Chinese take-out that the money to pay for the free food had been deposited. There is an unconfirmed suggestion within party circles that as much as \$1,000 was deposited in the bank, however none of the people interviewed would discuss this issue. As well, representatives of the bank and the Chinese take-out refused to discuss the vouchers — or their role in the scheme. The scheme went like this: The money (\$1,000) was deposited in the local bank and in return the bank stamped 100 of the food vouchers valued at \$10 each. One voucher was provided to each voter after the ballot was shown to indicate the entire Sullivan slate had been voted for. Then, over the next few days, the voter brought the voucher to the Chinese take-out to be redeemed for free food. The owner of the restaurant then brought the vouchers to the bank where he was paid his money. There were suggestions that the Sullivan team had tried several other vote enticing gimmicks, but they had all back-fired, losing scarce campaign money. The Fogo Island scheme would ensure the campaign spent only the money it needed, as after a period of time, any money not covered by the returned vouchers would be returned to the people who deposited it — Welsh and Snow.

These actions were clearly in violation of the democratic principle of the secret ballot. Why, therefore, would Sullivan and/or his team of supporters employ such tactics? The theory of "dirty hands in politics," from S.L. Sutherland's "The Problem of Dirty Hands in

Politics: Peace in the Vegetable Trade"⁴ helps explain the actions of politicians and their operatives under these kinds of circumstances.

Sutherland argues that the conventional dirty hands problem is not particularly significant and that a much more serious test of the moral quality of public life in society is how that society enables formal retrospection upon and judgement of the inevitable episodes of unwise, intemperate or immoral political action by leaders or potential leaders. The actions of the Sullivan supporters were all of these — they were unwise, intemperate and immoral. Sutherland argues that it is "the deliberate corruption of democracy that should attract our scrutiny."⁵ By counselling the youth delegates to do what they did, the Sullivan supporters were deliberately trying to corrupt democracy by undermining the sanctity of the secret ballot at the delegate selection meeting.

In one of the subtitles of the Sutherland article, the author asks "How Can We Escape the Dirty Hands World?" By posing the question, there is an acknowledgement that there exists a counter argument to the statement that, in politics, the ends always justify the means — no matter how corrupt these ends may be. The essential message of the critics of democracy — "that there exists an unbridgeable gulf between those who lead and those who are led" — only serves to support the Machiavellian theory that if the masses are permitted access to power, the more likely the state and society will be placed in the "gravest of danger"

⁴S.L. Sutherland. "The Problem of Dirty Hands in Politics: Peace in the Vegetable Trade." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. XXVIII:3 September, 1995.

⁵Sutherland. 1995.

because of the stupidity and ignorance of the masses. In other words, leaders have a right to lead the masses, and in leading [or, indeed, in seeking leadership], have the right to break the rules even if this rule breaking runs against the collective good. To return to the examination of the Fogo Island situation, it was apparent that the Sullivan team, for whatever reason or reasons, was convinced that they could not count on the people of Fogo Island to vote for the slate which had committed themselves to support Sullivan at the convention unless a proportion of them were bribed to do so. Believing Loyola Sullivan would be the best leader of the PC Party, they went ahead and knowingly broke the rules in order to reach the goal of electing him their party leader.

Sutherland continues with the search for the answer to the question of how to escape the politics of dirty hands by challenging the definition of the "dirty hands *world*," arguing that the dirty hands politician must be convinced that at some higher level it was somehow "right" to have done wrong and therefore the politician has been ennobled and tempered by the trauma of having undertaken a course of action from which ordinary persons would shrink. This is a theory that rightly belongs in another political era. Sutherland takes issue with the assumption that the typical dirty hands scenario has a known consequence, or a predictable consequence for the dirty hands leader. There is no guarantee, argues Sutherland, that in a given set of circumstance in the modern world of mass communication and mass media could such a series of cause [the dirty hands deed] and consequences [the planned results of the deed] plausibly interact for the predicted result. In other words, in today's society, the means do not always guarantee a predictable outcome, and most often won't. Sutherland suggests

that because politics is essentially a social activity, "dirty hands" politics will inevitably come under public scrutiny [i.e.; Fogo Island]. Had the rules committee of the PC party not been made aware of the incident on Fogo Island, and had the news media not been made aware, a decision to overturn the election of the Fogo Island delegates would never have happened, and consequently, if we were to use an obvious, yet simplistic, equation, Loyola Sullivan would have won the leadership convention because his five Fogo Island votes would have tipped the balance in his favour by just two votes.

However, simply playing with the numbers does not provide us with a legitimate analysis, because there was a tremendous fallout from the Fogo Island affair that, most observers agree, had significant ramifications for Sullivan among elected delegates from other districts and particularly among the ranks of the *ex officio* delegates. Unfortunately, there was no data gathered from delegates to support this claim [or any other, for that matter]. But there is little doubt there was negative fallout for Sullivan from the Fogo Island affair. The issue was talked about among delegates, party officials and the news media before and during the convention.

The Trouty Incident

Another incident involving voter coercion and busing to a delegate selection meeting backfired for the Sullivan team in the district of Trinity North. This incident was never made public. Bus loads of fish plant workers were transported to the area of the delegate selection meeting in Clarendville from the upper part of the Bonavista Peninsula, from communities around Trouty, where a fish plant managed by Loyola Sullivan's brother, Blaine, was located. The plant wasn't operating at the time and the vast majority of the workforce was collecting income through The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS), the federal program which paid dislocated fishermen and plantworkers during the moratorium on fishing. For most, the TAGS funding was coming to an end, and training opportunities were minimal in the area. Workers were called by plant management and told a meeting to discuss training opportunities with representatives of Key-In Technical College was being held in Clarendville at the Legion Club [which was located next door to the Kin Centre, where the delegate selection meeting was being held that same night], and they were requested to take along a form of identification, although they weren't told why they would need the ID. However, in order to vote at a delegate selection meeting of the PC Party, the voter must show proof of residence in the district. During the drive from the upper portion of the Bonavista Peninsula to Clarendville, these plant workers were handed sheets of paper containing the names of the Sullivan slate at the PC meeting and asked to go next door following their own meeting to vote for the people on the sheet. They were told then that was why they were required to

bring along their ID. Verge organizers in the district heard of this ploy earlier in the day and made numerous phone calls into the area to inform people of what was being attempted. Key individuals within the Trouty fishplant workforce were called by Verge organizers and told what was being attempted. As the delegate selection meeting progressed and it came closer and closer to the time voting would stop, supporters from both sides grew anxious. It was obvious from the turnout that up until half an hour before the close of the vote the Verge team was ahead, but only with a narrow lead of 30 to 40 votes. The anxiety was because neither side knew whether or not the Trouty fishplant workers would come over from the meeting next door and turn the tide for Loyola Sullivan. Blaine Sullivan spent most of the night nervously pacing around the room at the Kin Centre where the PC meeting was being held, slapping a rolled up wad of delegate sheets against his thigh. Then it started to happen. The doors of the Legion Club opened and well over 100 people came streaming out. If they came next door and voted the way the Sullivan team was hoping, they would turn the results of the Trinity North meeting. However, instead of coming next door, many of the people left in the dozen or so cars and pick-up trucks that were parked on the Legion Club side of the parking lot. Those who had no ride back because they had come in the buses seemed confused, wandering around the area where the buses were parked, as the buses were all locked and the drivers couldn't be found. It was a cold night in February and it wasn't long before about 60 of the plantworkers started coming over to the PC meeting. The Verge team had anticipated this and formed a V-shaped wedge so that when the people entered the meeting hall they would have to pass through the wedge. As the crowd moved into the

building the Verge delegates started speaking with them in groups of five and six, suggesting that they were being manipulated by the Sullivan brothers and if they were going to vote they had a choice, and they could vote for the Verge slate. Many of the workers agreed that they had been manipulated and that there was a great deal of anger and frustration among the workers, many of whom had left the meeting with the Key-in people in disgust. Most of the workers who came into the PC meeting were women. The final results of the Trinity North delegate selection showed that the play by the Sullivan team backfired, as the Verge slate won by more than 100 votes.

The Chicken Wars

The ramifications for the PC Party from the Fogo Island incident were even greater when Loyola Sullivan charged that supporters for Lynn Verge had purchased a large amount of take-out chicken from a Mary Brown's outlet in Glovertown for people attending a delegate selection meeting in Port Blandford in the district of Terra Nova. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this incident was how the public found out about it and how that public exposure involved the other leadership hopeful, Loyola Sullivan.

Verge supporters Glenn Greening [a former PC MHA for Terra Nova] and caucus member Alvin Hewlett were in the Terra Nova district organizing support for Verge for the delegate selection meeting. The meeting was scheduled for a small church hall in Port Blandford, which is located on the extreme eastern end of the district. Most of the support for Verge in the district came from the western end, around the Eastport Peninsula and Glovertown areas, a drive of about an hour to Port Blandford. The meeting was scheduled

for 7:00 p.m. Greening and Hewlett were finding that people were reluctant to make a commitment to drive that distance around the supper hour, in the middle of the winter, to vote at a delegate selection meeting. Greening came up with a solution. They would hire a number of buses and provide the people who would make the trip with a supper-time meal — a "snack pack" of take-out chicken and a soft drink. With two buses loaded with Verge supporters, some of whom were undoubtedly instant Tories, they pulled into the Mary Brown's outlet on the Trans Canada Highway near Glovertown. Greening ordered and personally paid for more than 150 snack packs of chicken and soft drinks. While the assembled Tory entourage waited patiently in the buses for this massive order, Loyola Sullivan pulled into the parking lot on his way to another meeting with potential delegates further west in central Newfoundland, looking for a quick bite to take with him on his way. To Sullivan's surprise [and Greening's glee] 150 Verge supporters trooped into the take-out to pick up their snack pack and soft drink - all wearing Verge buttons, which had been hastily distributed to them as they exited the bus. Sullivan apparently left in disgust — without his chicken.⁶ Later that evening the Verge slate easily won the delegate selection meeting for Terra Nova district.

The incidents at Glovertown and Fogo Island quickly entered the category of the media cliché and the public was made aware of these measures being employed by both leadership camps. The media was soon categorizing the leadership race as the "chicken

⁶Glenn Greening. Personal Interview.

wars," further tarnishing the public image of the PC Party in Newfoundland and Labrador. More allegations were raised by the Sullivan side about Verge supporters providing free food for prospective voters, particularly at Paton College, a student housing complex at Memorial University in St. John's, where students were provided with submarine sandwiches and a soft drink in return for attendance at delegate selection meetings in St. John's East and St. John's Centre.

Verge never denied that her team got involved in this kind of activity, but she did maintain that the activities never involved a violation of the sanctity of the secret ballot, which the Sullivan people had done on Fogo Island. She suggested that there was nothing wrong with candidate representatives providing refreshments for people attending delegate selection meetings, as long as the refreshments weren't alcoholic beverages and the sanctity of the secret ballot was maintained. She said that while refreshments like take-out chicken or sandwiches were provided by her representatives, there was never any suggestion that this influenced the outcome of a vote, because the individual could still vote for any of the representatives of either of the two candidates.

The media's choice of descriptive phrases for the PC leadership race continued to be less than appealing to the party. The "chicken wars" scenario soon gave way to "food fights"

and Verge supporters tried to make light of the situation by commissioning local cartoonist Kevin Tobin to draw a likeness of Verge as the woman in the Mary Brown Chicken logo, with the slogan "I'd rather have Lynn Verge"—a send up of the chicken outlet's own advertising slogan "I'd rather have Mary Brown."

The Verge cartoon was then put on T-shirts to be sold as a fundraiser. However, when some long-time party members found out about the T-shirts and the cartoon, they expressed their displeasure so loudly within the ranks of the party that the Verge people were forced to cancel the public sale of the T-shirts. Some were sold to Verge insiders to recover costs, so there are a few collectors' items still around. The party people were upset



with the send-up of the chicken wars issue because they believed the image of the party would be tarnished even further; this image was of a factioned party. They argued that making fun of the situation would only exacerbate the cleavage. The Verge people who initiated the

chicken T-shirt idea thought otherwise, suggesting that poking fun at the situation would make light of the cleavage, thereby sending a message that although there was a recognition of differences within the ideological makeup of the party, these differences could be overcome through accommodation and compromise — in a sense, they were suggesting that while the differences did exist, they weren't that big a deal and everyone within the party would benefit through accommodation. But people outside the Verge camp, and a few within it, didn't see it that way.

What did it all mean?

Did these dirty tactics and dirty tricks indicate something more than an expression of competition within a political party? The evidence of these dirty tactics supports the argument that the major ideological conflict within the party explains the willingness by individuals who held a different ideological view than Lynn Verge and her team to work against her and to use any kind of manipulative tactic or dirty trick they could muster to undermine her. This thesis has presented evidence to suggest that because of who Lynn Verge was and what she represented, she was never given a real chance to take the PC Party in the direction she wanted.

