

Amanda Bittner and Royce Koop (eds.)
Parties, Elections And The Future Of Canadian Politics
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Issues of political system of Canada, similarly to other dominions which create the British Commonwealth, have not been the subject of particular interest of constitutional law doctrine in European continent. This remark can also be related to the study of this branch of law in Poland because its representatives have devoted only several more extensive studies to Canada's political system. Among them, there is, first of all, there is a monograph of M. Grzybowski *Szkice kanadyjskie (państwo, ustrój, obywatele)*, Kielce 2003 and study of R. Radek *System konstytucyjny Kanady*, Warsaw 2011. Those studies, however, have only minor extension because they are concentrated on some system institutions or they only contain general characteristic of contemporary Canada's governmental system.

In consequence, the majority of publications dealing with political system of this country is the work of representatives of Canadian study of constitutional law and political science. Those publications also include a monography, reviewed in this text, which is one of the newest studies focused on transformations and recent problems of political system and national regime of Canada. The publication was prepared by a team of 17 authors in which two political scientists of younger generation took up the function of editors: prof Amanda Bittner from Newfoundland University in Saint Johns and prof. Royce Koop from University of Manitoba in Winnipeg.

Authors of the studies included in this monograph focus their attention on two fundamental issues. First of them is an issue of evolution and current shape of Canada's party system as well as role of those political parties which have been receiving the highest support from the electorate in recent years. Second plane of considerations includes selected aspects of voting rights to the federal parliament and the issue of political representation with significant impact on factors of another parliamentary

elections as well as their influence on the political line-up at the House of Commons of Canada. Detailed considerations were preceded by extended introduction (*Change and Continuity in Canadian Parties and Elections*), in which general presentation of the newest transformations in the party and elections system of Canada was made by authors.

Each of authors adopting the problematic aspects of party system modification in Canada jointly agree that three changes of: 1993, 2004 and 2011 had the highest significance for the shape of political scene in this country during the last 25 years. Undoubtedly, we should agree with them because each of those dates was involved with far-reaching transformations both in the previously existing party system and in the political line-up in the federal parliament.

Through many decades, the political party of Canada had all features of two-party classical system because only two dominant parties had been competing between themselves: Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and Liberal Party of Canada. Radical breakthrough following in 1993 when the conservatives (having 169 so far, i.e. the absolute majority in the House of Commons) suffered 'historical' defeat in the parliamentary elections receiving barely 2 MP seats. Since then, there has been a significant dominance of liberals who also receive the absolute majority of votes in the House of Commons (in 1997 and 2000) and who created one-party parliament which, of course, was beneficiary for stabilization in office functioning.

Another breakthrough moment was federal parliament elections in 2004. Those elections brought, among all, significant decrease in support for the Liberal Party, therefore liberals were forced to establish minority office of Paul Martin. In this manner, a period of several year minority governments functioning begun in Canada which had to count for support from the weaker parliamentary groups. Next elections to the House of Commons in 2006 and 2008 brought, in turn, a success of the Conservative Party of Canada which received 124 and 143 seats accordingly in the general number of 308 seats in the lower house of parliament.

For the third time, a far-reaching reshuffle on the political scene of Canada was brought by the last parliamentary elections of 2011. They were finished by a complete success of conservatives who received 166 seats and created first majority government since 2004. On the other hand, the Liberal Party received only 34 seats which was the worst result in the history of this party. Due to this, the role of formal opposition was taken over by New Democratic Party for the first time which held 103 seats in the House of Commons.

Presented analysis of various federal parliament elections system aspects and model of political representation in the monograph was connected with normally discussed in this part transformations in the party system of Canada. A great deal of attention was brought on the evaluation of adopted reforms in House of Commons voting rights, the aim of which was, first of all, improvement of deputies election and provision of the most rational representation in the federal parliament of particular

provinces and election districts. At the same time the issue of money role increasing in the electoral system in Canada was underlined, especially within the scope of financing of political campaigns.

Authors of text dealing with the parliamentary elections concentrated only on the House of Commons voting system because it is the only chamber of the federal government the panel of which is elected in general and direct voting. However, remarks on the manner of shaping of the second chamber of the Canadian Parliament (the Senate) was missing for me especially because there are proposals of introduction of general elections also to this chamber. The panel of Senate is elected traditionally in a manner of Senators nominations which are done by the General Governor (representing the Head of State in Canada who is formally the Monarch of the United Kingdom of Great Britain), whereas the motions within this scope are always filed by the Prime Minister of the federal government. Such a system of forming the second chamber of parliament is undoubtedly unique in modern political systems. I will also add that in the content of reviewed monograph, there was a lack of evaluation of results to the Quebec province in 2012 which allowed for success of French speaking and separatist *Bloc Qyebecois*.

Apart from the mentioned introduction, the whole study consists of 14 separate but not very extensive chapters. First of them (*Has Brokerage Politics Ended? Canadian Parties in the New Century*), the author of who is Kenneth Carty, characterises the transformations in the system of Canadian political parties which took place at the beginning of 21st century. He focuses his particular attention of the process of systematic decrease in support from the electorate fro candidates of the Liberal Party, particularly between 2004-2011, with the congruent (within the same period) increase of seats received by New Democratic Party.

In next chapter (*Candidate Recruitment in Canada: The Role of Political Parties*), William Cross and Lisa Young shows the political mechanism of candidate selections to be House of Common's deputies. It is worth to underline, analogically to other political systems, the dominant role in the process of appointing candidates are played by political parties, that is why receipt of a seat by independent candidate is very rare.

Three following chapters were devoted to more detailed issues within the scope of electoral practice. In the third chapter *Constant Campaigning and Partisan Discourse in the House of Commons*), Kelly Blidook and Matthew Byrne focus their attention on several aspects of political campaign, including that conducted by the MPs during the House of Commons proceedings. The topic of fourth chapter (*Constituency and Personal Determinants of MPs' Positions on Social Conservative Issues in the 37th and 38th Canadian Parliaments*), written by Munroe Eagles, is issue of parliamentary debates on social problems during two cadencies of the parliament. Fifth chapter (*City Minister: The Local Politics of Cabinet Selection*), the author of which is Antony

M. Sayers, deals with selected issues of government creation after parliamentary elections.

Chapter six (*Women Voters, Candidates, and Legislators: A Gender Perspective on Recent Party and Electoral Politics*) Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant analyses the problem of visible activation of woman in the Canada's political life. Systematic growth of woman share both in the panel of federal parliament and in broader scope - in the panel of legislatures of particular provinces, is a proof for this process in a view of the author. There is also a question, how new tendencies in the party and electoral system of Canada may support growing activity of woman in taking part in parliamentary elections as well as implementation of its basic functions.

The content of seventh chapter (Revisiting the "Ethnic" Vote: Liberal Allegiance and Vote Choice among Racialized Minorities) prepared by Alison Harell, is the issue of ethnic minority taking part in elections. In Canada it can be counted into significant issues of electoral system, and this is due to necessity of provision of active possibility to take part in elections of native residents of this country (Eskimoo and Indians) who are dispersed within a large territory in the northern ends of the province.

In the chapter eight (*The Canadian Party System: Trends in Election Campaign Reporting 1980-2008*) Blake Andrew, Patrick Fournier and Stuart Soroka characterise the conduct of political campaigns in elections to the federal parliament. In turn, Russell A. Williams in the ninth chapter, entitled *Parties, Politics, and Redistribution: the Constitutional and Practical Challenges of Politicized Apportionment*, deals with very important problematic issue of deputy mandates divisions in the parliament in relation to the number of votes cast for particular political parties. No less important issues were mentioned in the tenth chapter (*Too Little, Too Soon: State Funding and Electoral District Associations in the Green Party of Canada*), where Harold J. Jansen and Lisa Lambert dealt with the issue of elections financing. Their considerations were base both on the analysis of binding legal regulations and experiences from electoral practice, taking the problem of financing of taking part in the elections of Canadian Green Party.

Three another chapters of the study are also noteworthy in which there also were adopted other problems connected with the functioning of the party system of Canada. In the content of eleventh chapter (*When Partisans Are Attacked: Motivated Reasoning and the New Party System*) Scott Matthews presents the frames and forms of political discourse in conditions of changing party system. Amanda Bittner dealt with the similar problematic in the twelfth chapter (*Coping with Political Flux: The Impact of Information on Voters' Perceptions of the Political Landscape 1988-2011*). First of all, she wants to determine how often and significant transformations in the Canadian party system are seen by the voter. In thirteenth chapter (*Situating the Canadian Case*) Richard Johnston concluded several general reflections on political system of contemporary Canada.

The study which closes the presented monograph is fourteenth (*Parties and Elections after 2011: The Fifth Canadian Party System?*) by Royce Koop and Amanda Bittner. They ponder what the consequences of the results of the 2011 House of Commons election would be, which ended by a undisputable victory of the Conservative Party of Canada and creation of a majority cabinet. Here a very important question occurs: is there another (historically fifth) model of party system in Canada since 2011? There is no unanimous answer granted by editors of this monograph.

The reading of reviewed monograph leads to a basic conclusion that it is very valuable and extremely current study on basics institutions of Canada's contemporary political system. Therefore, they can be strongly recommended to those interested in various aspects of the structure and functioning of political systems of democratic countries.

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