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## Outspoken Kim Campbell May Be Canada's Next Leader -- The Candid Candidate

By Marla Williams

VANCOUVER, B.C. - Never mind that she's insulted half of Canada with coarse political talk, there's something quite regal about Kim Campbell.

Perhaps it's the tilt of her head, the beatific smile she bestows upon both nobles and commoners as she campaigns. Or maybe it's her flair for royal foul-ups.

Campbell is running for prime minister. Should she be elected this week to lead Canada's Progressive Conservative Party, at a convention in Ottawa, the keys to the prime minister's official residence automatically become hers.

She is expected to win the Tory leadership. To become Canada's 20th prime minister and the first woman to lead this nation of 27 million. If she does, she would also become the first Canadian born and bred on the West Coast to reside at 24 Sussex.

But it could be a short stay. Within six months of assuming office, Campbell would be required to defeat the leaders of Canada's two other major political parties in a general election. And at the moment, the public is not as enamored of Campbell as convention delegates are.

"Kimmie! Kimmie! Kimmie!"

As the 46-year-old Campbell enters the hotel at Harrison Hot Springs, the chanting gets louder, more urgent.

"KIMMIE! KIMMIE!" Some 400 Tories, delegates at the provincial party's annual meeting, are stamping and shouting. Forcing her way through the crowd, Campbell squeezes hands and kisses cheeks.

"She's brilliant, absolutely charismatic," says John Plul, 52, of Vancouver, as Campbell passes. "And above all, she can win the general election."

Plul's assertion is at least half prayer.

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There's little public affection currently for the Conservative Party. After eight embattled years, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, a Tory, is leaving office because he cannot win re-election.

Conservatives think Campbell is their best hope. And until recently, her popularity was such that Canada's federal election process was looking more like a coronation than a contest.

Across Canada, an infatuated electorate couldn't get enough of "Queen Kimmie." With a passion usually reserved for British royalty and ice hockey, Canadians swore loyalty to the engaging woman from British Columbia who in 10 years rose from the Vancouver school board to Parliament and a cabinet-level post as minister of defense and veterans affairs.

Impetuous as she is intelligent, Campbell has never been content to patiently wait her turn. She has long relied on her instincts - which by all accounts run counter to those of most politicians. These traits, more than her drive to change the world, have contributed to her spectacularly swift political ascent.

Along the way Campbell married and divorced twice, admitted to smoking marijuana, and as federal justice minister bared a fine pair of shoulders in a memorable photograph.

She also revealed she was "conceived atop a timber lookout near Port Alberni," born Avril Phaedra (not Kim) Campbell, and that when running for University of British Columbia frosh president, her campaign slogan was "Kim is Cuddlier" (she won).

As Campbell confessed all this, Canadians gasped but urged her on. Because just as Americans last year demanded change, Canadians this year want a break from political sameness and drudgery.


Although they blame Mulroney for their country's 11 percent unemployment rate, high taxes and continued French-English bickering, many Canadians were willing to give another Conservative a chance - so long as it was Campbell. Her high spirits and unconventional style were refreshing. Her frankness even more so.

Then Campbell's characteristically candid tone began sounding intemperate - almost intolerant - and rather too naive for some Canadians.

During a series of nationally televised debates last month, Campbell called opponents of the Progressive Conservative Party "enemies of Canada."

In a magazine article, she said she'd been confirmed an Anglican while attending a Catholic boarding school in order to "ward off the evil demons of the papacy."

Perhaps worse, Campbell was quoted angrily dismissing voters who criticize government but refuse to become involved in party politics. "Who do they think is working to keep this society intact so they can have the luxury of sitting back and being such condescending SOB's?" she said in Vancouver magazine. "To hell with them."



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Surprising as it may seem from people who scream for more blood on the ice, many Canadians found Campbell's language unpardonably violent.

The shock is now wearing off, and along with it the public's infatuation with Campbell. A national survey conducted last week by the Canadian polling firm Angus Reid Associates, Ltd., indicated nearly half of all voters were not impressed by what they'd heard. And fully 35 percent of Conservative Party delegates said Campbell's comments made them "think worse" of her.

There's not much chance, however, that Campbell's bid for party leadership will be rejected this week by delegates.

Discounting three Conservative Party backbenchers, Campbell's only serious competition is Canada's fresh-faced minister of the environment, Jean Charest.

Articulate and bilingual, Charest has recently gained support among delegates and the general public. Less strident than Campbell, the 34-year-old Charest is making points as he quietly outlines his proposals for dealing with Canadians' main concerns - burgeoning federal debt and rising unemployment.

Still, most Tory delegates consider Charest too young. Additionally, Charest hails from Quebec, as does Mulroney, and by tradition the prime minister should be chosen from another province.

If Campbell is elected this week by Tory delegates, she will have to move quickly to put her imprint on Parliament. Already, Canada's Liberal Party has begun describing Campbell as "Mulroney in a skirt."

In fact, Mulroney is Campbell's mentor. And she does share many of his views on issues ranging from free trade with the United States and Mexico (she's for the North American Free Trade Agreement) to continued defense spending (as defense minister, she just approved \$4.4 billion for anti-submarine helicopters).

But she's hardly a Mulroney clone. Not only is her style more animated, her politics reflects the difference of a generation.

The same age as Bill Clinton, she seems to have a similar outlook. They share the perspective and commitment of baby boomers bent on reviving the activist spirit of the '60s.

Promising a sweeping renewal of Canada's political system, Campbell talks of bringing more women, minorities and political neophytes into government - often sounding like the man from Arkansas.

As pragmatic as she is outspoken, Campbell also preaches compromise. Although she can point to many accomplishments, she's as likely as Clinton to be criticized for waffling or too easily giving way under pressure.

In an instance that angered Canada's gay community, she introduced legislation prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals and lesbians - but outlawing same-sex marriages.

Campbell also appears willing to backtrack from promises.

Although an outspoken supporter of a woman's unconditional right to abortion, as justice minister she capitulated to anti-abortion forces. Attempting to avoid a messy fight, Campbell promoted a measure that would have made abortion illegal except when a mother's life was threatened. The bill was eventually defeated by the Canadian Senate, and Campbell lost points with both sides.

Like Clinton, Campbell will almost certainly have a tough time convincing the general public that she can be trusted.

But Campbell loves nothing better than a challenge.

Jostling with her political competition at a crowded Vancouver reception for Tory leadership candidates, Campbell faces the coming elections without hesitation.

"I'm going to win," she says. "Make no mistake, I take nothing for granted. I'm working hard and going to keep working hard. But I am going to win."

More than brash self-assurance, her words capture a lifetime pattern of seeking the rewards of risk.

"There's never been a percentage in playing it safe for me," she says, flashing a smile. "Certainly, I can't afford to start playing it safe now."

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