



Think Big: My Adventures in Life and Democracy

Preston Manning

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He built a party from nothing to become Leader of the Opposition in just 14 years Preston Manning grew up in a political household but his first career choice was as a business consultant. It was only years later, when he sensed a rising discontent among fellow Westerners, that he decided the time was right to establish a reform movement. In the fall of 1986, he wrote a memo in Calgary. In the spring of 1987 he addressed a meeting in Vancouver. In the fall the Reform Party's founding assembly was held in Winnipeg. And from then on the movement's progress was unstoppable.

This is a candid account by Reform's founder, and the father of the Canadian Alliance, of the most extraordinary story in contemporary Canadian politics. Manning describes Reform's first battles: the election of "Senator-in-Waiting" Stan Waters, the grassroots campaign against the Charlottetown accord, and the hard-fought 1993 federal election. He frankly acknowledges some of his party's early missteps in Ottawa. But he also recounts with vigour the cynicism – and worse – that was evident in the behaviour of the governing Liberal party. Manning denounces Mr. Chrétien's mishandling of the Quebec referendum. And he recapitulates in devastating detail the full story of Shawinigate.

Manning describes the birth of the Canadian Alliance. He follows the agonizing growing pains it experienced under Stockwell Day's inept leadership and he considers what might have been. He is candid in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the party's current leadership. Of his own career – post-politics – he is cheerfully forward-looking: there is challenging terrain ahead and Preston Manning proposes to serve as an advance scout.

This is a thoughtful, informed, sometimes surprisingly funny memoir by a man who has attained, by dint of his own extraordinary achievements, stature as a contemporary statesman.

From the Hardcover edition.

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