

Convention delegate assesses hopefuls guesses Turner for new Liberal leader

Bill Coats has written specially for the Free Press his impressions of the Liberal Party in Ontario convention last weekend. Mr. Coats will be North Halton's only delegate to the national leadership convention in April.

Impressions from the Liberal Party in Ontario Convention
by Bill Coats

Sandwiches with Paul Hellyer, coffee with John Turner, wine and cheese with Mitchell Sharp, Apples (Nova Scotia of course) with Allan MacEachen, coffee again with Paul Martin and something stronger with Eric Kierans — what a weekend in Toronto.

Don't let me mislead you. I shared all these activities with hundreds of other Liberals who were in Toronto last weekend for the Liberal Party in Ontario Convention. All the candidates for the leadership of the Federal Liberals were there and so were 2,500 delegates, alternates, and guests to the convention.

You could shake hands with all the candidates but unless you were lucky you didn't get to say much more than "hello" or "pleased to meet you."

This is not a report of what the candidates said or did but this is a very personal account of the impressions that these prospective leaders made on me.

Friday night at the convention was devoted to the candidate for the leadership of the Federal Liberal party. The Canadian room at the Royal York hotel was crowded with 2,100 persons who came with standing room only for those who arrived late.

This was the largest group of persons to be addressed by the candidates to date.

In order to add more interest to the proceedings the candidates were questioned by the people present. Three microphones were placed on the floor of the hall and people from the audience could ask questions directly of a specific candidate. Three rounds of questions were allowed with each candidate asked one question per round.

All the candidates showed their political abilities in deftly handling some red hot questions. After the question period, each candidate was permitted to address the gathering with a ten minute speech. It was during the speeches that I was able to form an opinion on each man.

Here are my impressions of what each one offered in the order in which the candidates spoke.

MITCHELL SHARP
Minister of Finance

Mr. Sharp was a very easy speaker. He spent his first few minutes discussing his search for an image.

He mentioned that he might appear somewhat the same as Mr. Stanfield and agreed that he was as good looking as Mr. Stanfield but the comparison ended there.

Mr. Sharp felt that the next prime minister of Canada would have to fully understand the economic situation that Canada was facing. He felt very qualified in this respect.

PAUL HELLYER
Minister of Transport

Mr. Hellyer was the only speaker to set out in point form what he thought the most important issues were. Here they are and in order of importance.

Canada must play an important role in bringing about world peace. The Federal government must play a key part in shaping a new confederation.

There must be an improvement in the quality of life for the Canadian people. This would come about through a re-emphasis of family life aided by more concern for housing at reasonable price, medical care etc.

The fourth item of importance was the development of our natural resources in order to Canadianize our economy. Next was a concept of "total transport", a 20th century approach to transportation between our urban centres. The last item on Mr. Hellyer's list was eradication of poverty and disease.

JOHN TURNER
Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs

Mr. Turner referred to the need to gain confidence in the ability of Canada to grow and prosper. The Liberal Party must offer an alternative to the rigidity of the N.D.P. and the gloom of the Conservatives.

Mr. Turner felt that there was much to be done in Canada but before anything could be done effectively, it would be necessary to modernize the machinery of our government. Our system of government must be improved. The supremacy of the elected representative must be re-established. Parliament must be improved with more assistance for the members in order that they can be more effective.

After parliamentary reform, Mr. Turner stated other problems that needed solving would be housing, rehabilitation, retraining, unity of the country, and Federal-Provincial division of power.

JOE GREENE
Minister of Agriculture

Mr. Green stressed the need for a leader who would be acceptable in all areas of Canada. The next prime minister would be most concerned with the economic growth as the need of the future. We must build a Canada with courage, strength and foresight.

ERIC KIERANS
Quebec M.L.A. and former President of the Quebec Liberal Association

Mr. Kierans did not feel that national unity was as big an issue as some people would make out. The vast majority of people in Quebec are Canadians and wish to remain Canadians.

However, since the Lesage government awakened Quebec from its semi feudal days under Duplessis, there has been a discontent in Quebec. Mr. Kierans felt that each side must reach deep within themselves to find that which will lead to admiration for the other and hence to full recognition.

Our greatest problems are economic ones — run on the dollar — rising interest rate. We must learn to do the job ourselves, and not depend on the Americans to bail us out.

Mr. Kierans pointed out that the N.D.P. and others were very anxious to re-distribute the wealth through aids to education, medicare, social reform etc. However, before you can re-distribute the wealth, you must produce it. This calls for more use of Canada's natural resources.

In conclusion, Mr. Kierans felt that although constitutional reform was important, the future of Canada lay in the hearts of twenty million Canadians, not in any laws the government could pass.

At this point in the proceedings we came to two of the lesser candidates. I was impressed by former mayor of Portage La Prairie, Reverend Lloyd Henderson. His theme was the need to develop our young people. There is the future of our country. Mr. Lionel Laframboise of Elliott Lake talked of his experiences as a leadership candidate. He is showing that although everyone may not get to be the prime minister of Canada, at least anyone may try.

PAUL MARTIN
Minister of External Affairs

Mr. Martin felt that the Liberals needed to speak directly to the people. We must encourage a greater determination for unity than the determination that is shown by those who wish to separate. There is a need for understanding, but we are a mature people.

What is needed in our highest office is experience not experiment. Our concern must be to play a larger role in the international community. World peace is paramount. At home our problems are unity and our trade and economic position. We must develop our foreign trade and natural resources.

ALLEN MAC EACHEN
Minister of Health and Welfare

There must be a re-emphasis of Liberal principles. Only liberalism can meet the new and changing society but it must be done with vision. We must look at the credibility of the Liberal Party so far as the people of Canada are concerned. Then we must offer a real choice to conservatism.

Mr. MacEachen was the last speaker of the evening.

I had occasion to meet Pierre Trudeau earlier in the evening. I didn't hear his address to the people but I must confess that I was not overly impressed.

I went to the meeting with a reasonably open mind. Based on what I saw and heard I have formed by own personal rating. I put John Turner at the top of my list, followed by Paul Hellyer, Mitchell Sharp and Joe Greene in that order.

The Saturday session of the Liberal Party in Ontario convention dealt with many routine matters.

Plans are being made already for the next provincial election four years away. Part of this plan is to re-appraise and update the policies of the Liberal Party in Ontario.

In order that the policies reflect the needs and desires of the people, the Liberal party wants to involve as many people as possible in policy.

Bob Nixon, the leader of the Ontario Liberals, reported on plans for the Policy Rally to be held in the fall of 1969. Before that time each riding is to hold two policy meetings. Then the ridings will report to the regions and so on up to the provincial level.

Mr. Coats concludes, "The Acton Liberal Association is most interested in hearing from anyone with comments or suggestions on the future policy of the Liberal Party in Ontario. Watch for our forthcoming meetings which will be announced through this paper."

Acton teacher's car wrecked

An Acton motorist was injured and his car was classed a "total wreck" in a single-car accident on Highway 7, just west of Acton Friday afternoon.

Police said Douglas Michael Hines, 70 Longfield Rd., a teacher at the Robert Little school, suffered lacerations to the head and right hand in the accident. Mr. Hines was taken to hospital for x-rays but was released and back teaching Monday.

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Harley to Halton

by harry harley m p

The Bill on the Broadcasting Act has finally passed the House of Commons during third reading. Ralph Cowan attempted to send the Bill back to Committee for further study on one particular clause.

Without the aid of some of the Members of the New Democratic Party who voted with the Government not to do this, the Government would have been defeated. As this was a suggestion to refer the Bill back to the Committee for study, the defeat of the Government on this amendment would probably not have precipitated a general election but it would have caused acute embarrassment to the Government.

It is a reminder that at any time the Opposition Parties in full force decide to vote against the Government that the Government can be defeated because we are in a minority position.

The Constitutional Conference has ended and all parties seem to be in agreement that it was a success. It has granted linguistic rights to those of the French language outside of Quebec, equal to those of English Canadians inside of Quebec, right across Canada.

The House of Commons is now expected to debate the amendments to the Income and Excise

Tax Acts which are the last Budget proposals to be brought in by the Minister of Finance.

It is likely that in the very near future, the Bills introduced in the Senate concerning LSD and Birth Control will be brought up for debate in the House of Commons and will probably pass without incident.

The Prime Minister is expected to make a statement on Medicare within the next day or so.

Seek to improve h.s. communications

Following a recommendation from the school board-teacher committee on quality education, a "Communications Night" is being held at the high school Wednesday, February 28. Invitations are being sent to parents of high school students to attend the special program in the school to delve into the problem of communication between the teachers, pupils and the home.

The speaker will be G. R. Cromb, the area superintendent. The date is set for the week before Education Week.

Council decides not to submit brief on taxation

Acton council turned down a request from the Ontario government for a submission on taxation but not through lack of concern or interest.

They felt the county and the town and village section of the Ontario Municipal Association represented a good cross-section of thinking on the subject and would adequately represent opinion here.

"If there's a specific point we want to bring up we should cue our representatives on these bodies who will submit briefs," suggested Councillor Drinkwater.

"There'd be no end to submissions if everyone submitted as suggested," declared Dr. F. Oakes.

Another "first"

S. G. Thorn, termed a "pupil accounting auditor" was at the high school Monday and Tuesday.

Principal Hanson commented in all his years of teaching this was the first time he'd encountered an auditor going through school registers.

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