

# Halton Hills Outlook

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## Their Outlook

### Quebec caucus: all is not well



#### Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

To understand all the currents and undercurrents flowing through the Conservatives' Quebec caucus might well require a doctoral thesis - but it doesn't take much education to know that all's not well.

Nor should anyone expect it to be. After sweeping 57 of the province's 75 seats in the 1984 election, and now seeing the party's popularity plunge to depressing depths in the opinion polls, it's obviously a time for some uncomfortable reflections. And since all but two of these 57 MPs came here without prior parliamentary experience, and with personal expectations probably running unrealistically high, the discomfort factor is further compounded.

In any event, there is a healthy handful of Quebec Tory MPs who haven't been happy with the way the party is being run in the province. After things recently came to a head, most of the Quebec MPs now are talking happiness, peace and harmony, but there are obviously problems still bubbling close to the surface.

The trick is to keep the lid on them - and even Prime Minister Mulroney has become directly involved in this process.

#### PM APOLOGY

After Montreal MP Edouard Desrosiers threatened to punch out a reporter from Le Devoir - he actually grabbed Michel Vastel by the necktie before being restrained by colleagues - the prime minister personally phoned the reporter to apologize.

He also ordered Mr. Desrosiers to apologize - which the MP did, without any outward display of enthusiasm.

He had apparently objected to stories in Le Devoir which included his name among the "dissidents" in the Tories' Quebec caucus. But regardless of Mr. Desrosiers' views on the state of affairs, there is clearly a group unhappy with the way things are being done for the party in Quebec.

One MP, frequently named as the leader of the dissidents or, if you prefer, reformists, is Francois Gerin from Megantic-Compton. Stanstead who had complained about the party being led by "complacent reactionaries and bagmen."

When Industry Minister Michel Cote said that Mr. Gerin had better stop criticizing the party or "decide what to do," there was immediate talk of expulsions from caucus. In fact, Energy Minister Marcel Masse was quoted in a Quebec newspaper as saying he planned to expel two or three dissidents.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gerin was quoted as saying he didn't have to take orders from anyone but the prime minister.

#### GETS SUPPORT

To settle matters, Mr. Masse called a special meeting of Quebec MPs. It was fully expected that the two or three alleged dissidents would be turfed out.

But as the meeting got underway, one MP after another began saying complimentary things about Mr. Gerin. It became clear that, whatever they are called, there were a good number of MPs - 20 or more - who are impatient for changes in the party structure in Quebec.

"When you drop in the polls you've got to become more reformist to change some perceptions," said MP Louis Plamondon.

What the group wants, among other things, is a more democratic party structure, more grass roots participation in policy and limitations on corporate contributions to all political parties.

Mr. Masse proposed the creation of eight policy-making committees, composed of MPs, which will submit recommendations for the next convention of the party's Quebec wing.

Afterwards, there were conflicting versions of what it all means in the long run. Some so-called reformists said it was a great victory for them; others said absolutely nothing had changed. All of them, perhaps for differing reasons, said the rift has been healed.

But beneath the surface, the healing process seems far from complete. What may be required is a few months of basking in improved opinion polls. That tends to work wonders with internal party bickering.



### Every parent needs help from his kids

At long last, after decades of Dr. Spock-inspired permissiveness, there has been a blessed breakthrough in the philosophy of child-rearing.

An Ottawa-based family counsellor has just been quoted in the papers as saying that children should be taught to accept responsibility at a much earlier age.

"From the time they are very small, we do almost everything for our children and then when they hit age 10 or 12, we suddenly decide it's time they start making their own beds or making their own lunch to take to school."

"Every day, ask yourself if you've done anything for your children that they were capable of doing themselves."

Well, this strikes me as superb advice - and I speak as something of an expert on child-rearing, since I've never had a child.

This means I can address the issue logically and dispassionately, without being influenced by such things as paternal instincts.

My own childhood, quite frankly, was harsh and rigorous. We had only one television channel, and no VCR at all.

Moreover, I was cruelly abandoned by my mother in my hour of greatest need.

I was 12 at the time. My little friend, who had a paper route, moved out of town, and my father ordered me to take the route on.

Well, this misrepresents things just a bit. He didn't actually order me to take the route. He just announced that he was cutting off my allowance, and that I could make my own decision.

"Blackmail" is a strong word. On the other hand, it's a terrible thing for a father to do to his eldest son.

In any case, I turned in desperation to my mother. But she was already wavering.

"Well, she hedged," all of us have to make a contribution in the family. Your father works all day, and I clean the house...

Unfortunately, this was about the time at which my mother was beginning to launch her writing career. So in a fit of pique, I retorted: "You don't spend the day cleaning the house. You spend the day locked in your study."

My mother stiffened. Her eyes hardened, and all vestiges of maternal love disappeared from her face. "Take the paper route," she snarled.

As it turns out, taking the paper route was a good move. In fact, it was the only job I've ever had that I was much good at. That's why it's good to hear that family counsellors are now urging parents to make their children take more responsibility.

Those wise words bear repeating: "Every day, ask yourself if you've done anything for your children that they were capable of doing themselves."

This, of course, is a pretty sweeping question.

Did you, by any chance, feed your child today? Did you help him with his homework?

On the morning of the blizzard, did you (shame!) drive him to school? Or - in the interests of his own well-being - did you advise him to stop snivelling as you punted him down the front steps?

But wait. This is starting to sound just a bit draconian. And nobody wants to be seen as a cruel and unfeeling parent. (Except, perhaps, my mother, on the night she threw me to the paper route. But that was years ago, and time heals even grievous wounds...)

As such, perhaps we should rephrase those wise words from the family counsellor, to state: "Every day, ask yourself if you've done anything for yourself that you could have made your children do for you."

### Ambulance volunteers

#### TO OUR TOWN FROM THE EMS

Sorry if we woke you  
In the middle of the night  
But someone in your neighborhood  
Is fighting for his life

Sorry if we block the road  
And make you turn around  
But there's been a bad wreck  
With children dying on the ground

When you see us coming  
We hope you'll understand  
Let us have the right-of-way  
Someone needs our helping hand

Sometimes a child is choking  
Sometimes a broken leg  
Sometimes a heart stops beating  
And when we get there - it's too late

So if you see us crying  
When we think that we're alone  
You'll know we had a "bad one"  
And we're feelin' mighty down

You ask us why we do it  
"How can you watch a child die?"  
It's never very easy  
But we'll try to tell you why

We don't do it for money  
You know we don't get paid  
We don't do it for the glory  
But for a life that might be saved

Somewhere deep within us  
Our souls are crying out  
"We're here to help our neighbors  
In their hour of pain and doubt."

God gave us something special  
To help us see you through  
We do it 'cause we love you  
And we care about you, too.

### Say yes!

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter was filed with the Herald for publication:

Rt. Hon. Brian Mulroney,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Sir:

President Reagan should say yes! Premier Gorbachev has proposed the removal of all medium range missiles from Europe, with "no strings attached."

Let's take him up on it! For the first time in 40 years of negotiating, the world would be reducing the number of nuclear weapons, instead of steadily adding more.

At your upcoming meeting with President Reagan, PLEASE encourage him to accept the offer. It would be good for him, and good for everyone on this planet.

Yours truly  
Ray Piercy

For the members of HAND

### Sunday law

Dear Sir:

The enforcement of Sunday Law is in opposition to the Scriptures that proclaim the seventh day as the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). Sunday is the first day of the week on the calendar. Constantine, the Christian Emperor, changed the Sabbath to Sunday in the Edict of Milan and the Christian Church enforced this change at the Council of Laodicea in 364 C.E.

Michael Lindelauf for  
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