

Charest's resignation 'just politics'

A couple of minutes after two o'clock last Wednesday afternoon I walked into the House of Commons and hit my chair.

Just as I did, Brian Mulroney stood up and announced that Jean Charest, the sports minister, was out of the cabinet. Two places to the left of me sat Stan Keyes, a Liberal MP from Hamilton, who as sports critic for the Opposition, had been the first to attack Charest the night before Keyes - and everyone else in the chamber - was silent as the prime minister made the statement, and then sat down.

Jean Charest was the youngest cabinet minister in the country's history. He's been in the cabinet for four years, and still he's only 31 years old today. Now he's the youngest-ever ex-minister. He's a lawyer from Sherbrooke, Quebec, and five weeks ago his wife gave birth to their third child.

Charest was also Deputy Leader of the Tories in the House; he sat on four cabinet committees; and he was a member of the Treasury Board. Now he is, like me, just an MP.

The fall from grace happened because Charest made a phone call to a judge who was hearing the case of a track coach excluded from the Commonwealth Games in New Zealand last week. Actually, the call was never complete, because the judge wouldn't talk to Charest. The judge later said his decision in the case was not affected by Charest in any way.

But that didn't matter. Cabinet ministers are not supposed to call judges. The rule is in place to make sure politics doesn't mess around with the law.

So, Charest offered to resign. Mulroney took him up on it. And one rising star wasn't rising anymore.

I have come to know this man a little. I respect him, and his accomplishments. I respect him even more now that he gave up the power and the position over what strikes me as such a minor event. And I hope he ends up again being an influence on the country.

There were a number of lessons for me in what I saw happen last week.

One lesson is about public expectations - how politicians have to be cleaner than clean. Cabinet ministers have to reveal their personal assets, live neat little lives and worry about how many scotch bottles they put in their blue boxes - lest some reporter takes an interest one day.

Another lesson was about partisan politics.

The day after Charest was gone, I turned and asked Liberal Stan Keyes - his public accuser - what he thought of the young cabinet minister. Are there any people in this House you think would be better in that job, I said?

Keyes said no. And he said he liked Charest - they were on a flight together recently, talking about their jobs and their families. But despite that, and his admission of Charest's competence, he felt justified at calling for the man's head on national television.



Garth Turner
MP
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PROGRESSIVE
CONSERVATIVE

"It's just politics," he said. I guess so. And that's a hell of a thing.

There are good people on both sides of the House of Commons. If they ever decided to work together, a few terrific things could happen for this country. But the system - and attitudes - keep them locked in this suicidal dance. It's a spectacle I don't like watching.

A few weeks ago I asked Jean Charest if, as a cabinet minister, if he would visit my riding and meet some of the people in our community. He agreed.

Last week I called his office and confirmed again that I still want him to visit - not as a minister any more, but as a man that I greatly respect, and that I want to share with you.

His talent will be lost for a while. Anyone who cares about Canada should regret that.

I saw another disturbing event over the last few days. The NDP members are against the GST, which is their right. They have vowed to do all they can in the House of Commons to prevent the legislation from passing.

That's also their right. Opposition MPs sometimes have to resort to strong-arm tactics to get their message across. When the Tories were in opposition, they sure were guilty of doing the same thing - tying the Commons up for weeks, at great expense to the taxpayer.

I wasn't in politics then, so I can't tell you if those actions were justified or not. I won't defend the Tories of those days just because I happen to be one now.

But I can tell you how upsetting it was for me to watch some members of the NDP disrupt the House by voting twice on a number of issues last week. First they would stand and be counted as supporting a measure, then stand

again when the Speaker asked who was opposed. It was all designed just to slow things down and frustrate everyone.

One afternoon they had over 200 MPs sitting in the House for three hours as one meaningless vote after another was taken. During that time committee meetings had to be cancelled, and absolutely nothing was accomplished. Those four lost hours cost taxpayers about \$500,000.

I sure didn't come to Ottawa for this garbage.

As your man in Ottawa, please accept my apologies.

Pinegrove euchre

NORVAL-Pinegrove Community Euchre had six tables last Monday. Winners were - Marion Hunter, Ethel Webb, Bruce Thatcher, Spencer Wilson. Lucky draw - Marie Murray and Mary Wilson. Committee was Gord and Peg Early and Irene Hunter.

Bowlers out of the alley



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The branch bowlers had a fairly good day at Port Credit last Saturday. The team of Gary Hole, Bruce Clarke, Al Gardner, Wayne Norton, Roger Duguay and Brinley Hole came second overall and will continue on to the District level competition. Gary Hole was the singles winner, and Gary teamed up with brother Brinley to place fourth in the Doubles. Well done and good luck in two weeks at the District.

CAR CLUB: Feb. 8 is the 20th week, and you know what that means. If you don't, better read the rules on your ticket. Members must be fully paid up by that date. This week's winners - 397 Joe Foster, 37 Lyn Tyler, 170 Don Maveal, 422 Albert Bisschop, 153 B.J. Reid and 111 A. Ford.

FRIDAY NIGHT EUCHRE:
High lady - Myrtle Zillo, second - Mae Tost, most lone hands - Lily Maybanks. High gent - Charlie Shepherd, second - Bert Porter, most lone hands - Ivy King.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON MEAT DRAW: Otis Taylor, D. Donnelly, Mary Russell, Colin Gibson, Bob McNeilly, Harold Badham, Grant Emmerson, Marg Hodder, and Red Roshier were all winners. The roast was won by Pauline McNeilly.

There will be a meeting of the Plymouth committee on Thursday, Feb. 1 in the lounge. All branch members are invited to involve themselves with the work of this committee if they so choose at 8 p.m. in the lounge.

COMING EVENTS: Valentines Dance, Plymouth Committee, Saturday, Feb. 10. On Saturday, Feb. 17, 757 Sq. will hold a supper and dance, talk to Joe Poirier for tickets.

ENTERTAINMENT: In the lounge on Feb. 3 - Ross Crawford.

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