

OPINION PAGE

Reflections on election night turnaround

Even as late as 9 p.m. election night last Thursday, supporters for the provincial Halton North incumbent Walt Elliot, who had gathered at the Cedar Springs Motel in Silvercreek for what was to be the expected victory party, thought their candidate would represent the riding for another term in the legislature.

They maintained their optimism despite continual television reports that the New Democrat Party had won a landslide victory and even Liberal Party Leader David Peterson had lost his seat.

But it wasn't difficult to sense the encroaching defeat as one Liberal seat after another was lost. They were worried about Mr. Elliot's chances. Instead of the usual hoopla that characterizes an expected political win, only whispers could be heard in the motel banquet room. As one of the 50 people at the motel commented, "you could hear a pin drop."

When Halton NDP candidate Noel Duignan was declared the winner, shortly after nine p.m., one Elliot supporter in an understatement summed up the feelings of everybody else, saying,

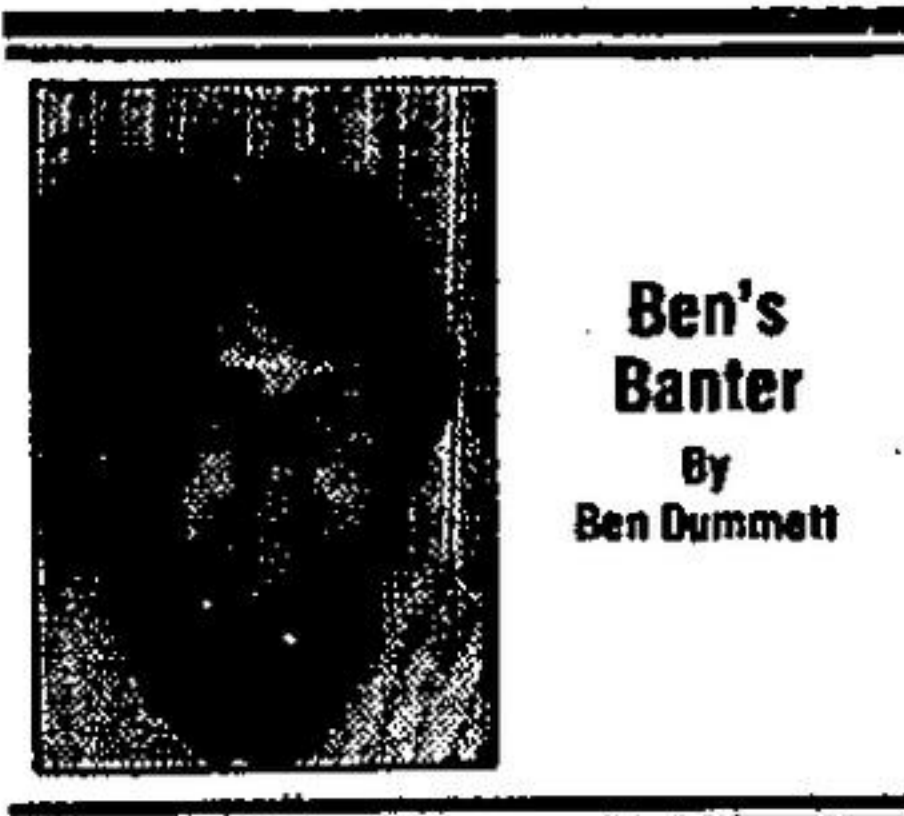
"let's just say I'm not a happy camper."

Others, such as Carole Lawson, couldn't contain their disappointment. When approached by reporters outside the banquet hall for a reaction to the loss, Ms. Lawson, who has known Mr. Elliot since childhood, couldn't hold back the tears.

Saying she was the first person Mr. Elliot approached when considering a career in politics, Ms. Lawson stressed the loss didn't represent a vote against Mr. Elliot as a person. Mr. Elliot was just caught up in a protest vote against the party as a whole, she explained. "Mr. Elliot is a friendly, honest, reliable and understanding person," she enthused.

Mr. Elliot arrived at the motel approximately an hour later than expected - he was congratulating the winner, Mr. Duignan, at the NDP celebration headquarters - and urged the faithful to continue and stay involved in politics.

A loss like this produces "a gut wrenching feeling but we have to rise above it," Mr. Elliot told his supporters. Although he said he would now enjoy his retirement he



Ben's Banter

By Ben Dummett

also said he would continue to fight for the Liberal cause. He didn't state in what capacity he would carry on the fight.

Mr. Elliot attributed his loss and the Liberal Party loss to "a culmination of stuff," pointing to the Oka situation, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Federal government's Goods and Services Tax and a high Canadian dollar.

A lot of people were upset with government in general and the Liberal party took the brunt of it. Ironically, a lot of the issues on people's minds, the province had

no control over, he added.

Mr. Elliot also attributed his loss to the strong showing of the Family Coalition party, explaining he couldn't say definitely but most of the FCP votes probably came from the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives.

As to what he expects from the new government, Mr. Elliot would only say the workings of government "will change, but how remains to be seen."

The Liberal candidate said the local and national media gave his party a "bum rap" for calling an election when it did. Realistically governments in the past have called an election after two years into a term, Mr. Elliot told reporters.

But at least one Liberal supporter blamed the loss on the early election call. "When you have another two-and-a-half years, why call an election?" said a depressed Real Tetreault. "All provincial premiers should learn from this experience," he added.

Calling the election outcome "largely a protest vote," Liberal supporter, Rud Whiting - no relation to PC candidate Dave Whiting - said the election campaign was

mistakenly sold as "a talk with Canadians. Instead we should have taken off the gloves earlier," he said.

Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce president, Dave Page, had a curt response upon learning of the NDP victory: "It's a disaster, a socialist government! We don't need more taxes."

"Mr. Duignan is a nice man, I have no quarrel with him. I just have a problem with his party's policies," he continued.

Dave Blainey, Mr. Elliot's campaign manager, wasn't that surprised at the outcome. "I saw it coming 10 days ago," he said. "I saw this unfocused unease and anger out there, against all levels of government. And we were the first to run," he explained.

"I believe people in their heart of hearts wanted a change but I'm not sure they knew why. People would tell me they disliked Peterson, but when I asked the reason they couldn't provide an answer," said Mr. Blainey.

Based on the mood of the people, Mr. Blainey predicted politicians at all levels of government shouldn't think about job security.

Elliot Lake miners frustrated by politicians

By PAUL BAGNELL
Ottawa Bureau

Thomson News Service

OTTAWA - At the end of August, almost 1,600 workers left a Rio Algon uranium mine in Elliot Lake, Ont., for the last time. They joined 450 others on the town's unemployment rolls who had lost their jobs when another mine closed a month earlier.

The loss of more than 2,000 jobs in a town of about 19,000 is expected to cost the mining-dependent economy another 600 or 700 jobs, community leaders fear.

To help laid-off workers get the retraining they need to find new work, labor-management "industrial adjustment" committees have been formed. But, like other hard-hit towns in the country, Elliot Lake is being squeezed by the ongoing feud between the federal government and the Senate over the government's new

unemployment insurance legislation.

The Senate has twice refused to pass Bill C-21, legislation which would bring substantial changes to the way unemployment insurance is funded and applied. The government has twice refused to amend the bill to satisfy the Liberal-dominated upper chamber.

As far as retraining is concerned, the result has been the suspension of one program and a confusing, ad-hoc approach to the funding of another.

"We are receiving money in dribs and drabs," says Roger Taylor, chairman of Rio Algon's industrial adjustment committee in Elliot Lake.

Twice, the committee's supply of federal retraining money has run out, then been replenished with a last-moment announcement from Ottawa. The last installment, \$1 million, should last a month,

Taylor estimates.

"RELYING ON 'HAND-OUTS'"
"And then we will have to rely on another hand-out," he says, predicting at least \$10 million will be needed to provide retraining for everyone in Elliot Lake who needs it.

And each time the federal government signs another cheque, it make sure to tell Elliot Lake who it should be blaming for the uncertainty - the Senate.

Rick Perkins, an adviser to Employment Minister Barbara McDougall, says the new legislation would be more than double - to \$785 million - the money committed in 1980 to the retraining programs Elliot Lake and other communities are depending on.

Liberal senators, meanwhile, accuse the government of seeking to dismantle one of the cornerstones of Canada's social security network. The extra retraining money,

they say, will come out of dramatically slashed benefits and harsher eligibility requirements for workers in "low-unemployment" areas of the country.

The legislation would also end the federal government's \$3 billion-a-year contribution to unemployment insurance, recouping this from higher employer and employee premiums. The Senate wants the government to maintain at least a \$1.5 billion annual payment.

Labor organizations have accused the government of using retraining funds as a weapon in its war with the Senate.

IMPASSE CONTINUES

With Parliament set to resume sitting in late September, the ball is back in the Senate's court, but there is no sign of an end to the impasse.

The senators have proposed a

joint House of Commons-Senate "conference" to hammer out an agreement on the issue, an option which has been used just once before in 1947, over a bill to make changes to the Criminal Code.

The government has flatly refused, and most recently has suggested it may use an equally obscure constitutional clause to put more Tories in the Senate, potentially threatening the Liberals' majority.

Arcane constitutional strategies matter little in Elliot Lake, however, compared to the town's looming unemployment crisis.

"At the moment," says Taylor, "I can't say we have had a crisis - we haven't. But we've been very near the deadline on two occasions. The government is saying that if Bill C-21 passed, we could have all kinds of money - that we'd have commitments sufficient to our needs. I'm not close enough to the scene to know how true that is."

Similarities between Oka and FLQ crisis

By Stewart MacLeod
OTTAWA BUREAU
THOMSON NEWS SERVICE

OTTAWA - It's perhaps a bit early to draw comparisons, since we don't have all the details from the Mohawk crisis in Oka. But, already there are some unsettling similarities with the 1970 October Crisis in Quebec.

That was when then prime minister Pierre Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act to bring in the troops and put down an "apprehended insurrection." Remember the chilling reports of the day? We had every reason to believe there was a highly organized army of terrorists on the loose in Quebec, far too powerful to be handled by any police force.

There was talk of hundreds of FLQ cells, controlling thousands of potential street fighters. We knew they were well stocked with dynamite, because every time there was a theft of explosives in Quebec, it was attributed to the FLQ. There were reports of modern weaponry falling into their hands, perhaps bombs and missiles.

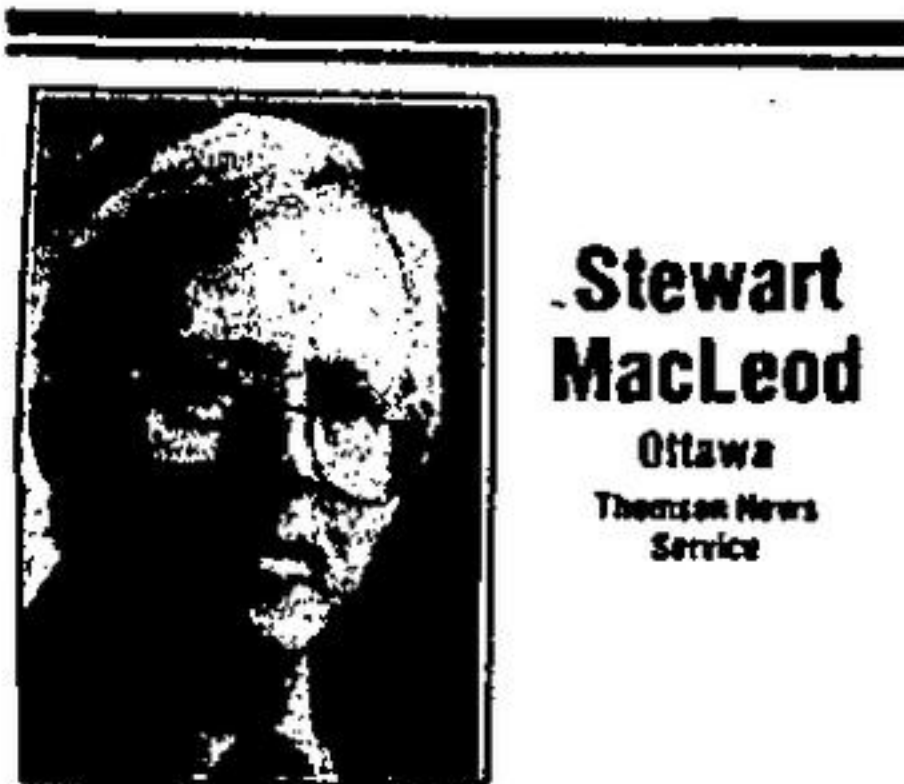
There were even doubts about the army's ability to handle the insurrection.

The reports were so frightening, and coming from such high authority, that only a handful of MPs, mostly New Democrats, opposed the imposition of the War Measures Act. Even such responsible members as Tory leader Robert Stanfield, with access to cabinet briefings, had no difficulty supporting the measure.

ALL CONVINCED

Certainly, citizens in and around Quebec were convinced that the army faced a formidable task. We had no reason to question our intelligence system. And it was assumed that if Premier Robert Bourassa and prime minister Trudeau felt it necessary to call in the military, there would certainly be justifiable grounds.

It was during this crisis that cabinet ministers, and most high-ranking public servants, ventured out in Ottawa only when escorted by a soldier toting a machine-gun. Again, if our security people felt this protection was necessary, we could only assume the enemy was



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lurking nearby, probably in frightening numbers.

Well, as things turned out, there were some rather large glitches in our intelligence network. And the murder of a Quebec cabinet minister, along with the kidnapping of a British diplomat, undoubtedly helped to throw things out of whack.

In any event, when the smoke finally cleared and the counting began, it turned out that the army didn't have much to worry about. And neither would any small-town police force.

A couple of dozen FLQ members

represented the army we faced. A few handguns, some dynamite, an old car and some other second-hand equipment, such as duplicating machines.

As apprehended insurrections go - assuming there have been some in the past - this could not have been one of the biggies.

SOUNDS FAMILIAR

While it's too early to conclude there has been similar misinformation surrounding the Oka crisis, there are certainly some indications of it. We were clearly led to believe the Mohawk Warriors were a formidable fighting force, armed to the teeth with the latest weaponry.

Those aerial photos that came to us courtesy of the armed forces were frightening in themselves. It was as though we were looking at some Vietnam battleground, complete with trenches. We were led to believe there were some 200 Warriors ready to die for their cause, and all came equipped with the latest weapons, perhaps including anti-tank missiles. There was talk of hidden bombs, grenades and other weapons that could only be

neutralized by a modern army.

Of course, the oft-used photos of masked Warriors walking around with assault rifles enhanced those fears.

But, as the army closed in around the dwindling Warriors, there seemed to be remarkably few discoveries of awesome weapons, apart from one machine-gun. No rocket launchers, no land mines. At least, none that anyone talked about. And, after all that was said about heavy firepower, we assume the authorities would love to talk about their finds.

They did say that weapons were probably flown out by small planes, but it's unlikely we'll ever know for sure.

The most fearsome thing found, apart from the machine-gun, was a string of propane tanks that could, presumably, be wired up as explosives. Some of us manage this, unintentionally, in our backyards.

Arsenals may yet be found. But, in the meantime, it's difficult to ignore the similarities with 1970 - and wonder just how much our intelligence services have improved since then.