

Editorial

Political reality

The New Democratic Party lives in Ontario! - or does it?

For years, the NDPers (often maligned as the No Damn Policy party) nibbled on the edge of voter respectability simply because of their constant harping on the sidelines at government - and even official opposition - stances on issues. The NDP 'Holier than thou' attitude irked a fair number of people and similarly turned-off a fair section of the voting populace in Ontario because, simply put, there were no potatoes to go with the beefs.

Prior to the recent provincial election campaign, NDP provincial party leader Bob Rae was regarded in some circles as more of a liability to the party than an asset.

He had jumped from federal politics into the provincial fray and took over the leadership of the provincial NDP in 1982. Rather than inject new life into the moribund provincial party, Rae - with his public and media-perceived wimpish ways - only served to further entrench the NDPers as a political entity with no basis in reality.

An image change was needed, from the perceptual point of view, for both the party and its leader.

Much in the same way the provincial Liberal party underwent a metamorphosis when David Peterson shed some pounds, switched from glasses to contact lenses, insisted on constantly sporting a red tie and allowed his hair to be well-coiffed, highlighted by the silvery sheen - to some he had become, almost overnight, a Bill Davis clone.

(FANFARE PLEASE). Then all of a sudden, with the ill-timed calling of the provincial election by the Liberals, we were suddenly introduced to "Badger Bob Rae". He had shed the cloak of "Redundant Robert" and was, all of a sudden, the fierce champion of the people, of the environment, of the downtrodden, of the - - - - pick a cause.

The rejuvenated Rae - who had been tempted to return to the federal scene and contest the leadership of the federal NDP party - had led his party out of the wasteland to become the first elected social democratic party in Ontario political history.

The reality was, however, that although the NDP won 73 seats at Queen's Park, claiming a clear majority, the party had only captured 37 per cent of the vote -

Colin Gibson



Editor's Notebook

clearly not a resounding vote of confidence from the electorate.

Last Tuesday's Throne Speech - outlining the course the NDP wishes to chart over its five-year mandate, was a lesson in political reality that should not be lost on those who voted NDP.

At best, the Throne Speech tossed a few tidbits to those who wished for political change in the province.

At worst, it was vague, promising commissions and studies on issues the NDP had promised to address during the election campaign.

Welcome to political reality.

Once elected, a political party's main function is to survive, to stay in power to perpetuate itself.

It cannot do that by appearing too radical, despite election campaign rhetoric.

The NDP will attempt to find the middle ground, just as the Liberals and the Progressive Conservative parties have in Ontario for years.

That really is too bad, especially when what is needed today - not just in Ontario but across Canada - is innovative, creative and courageous leadership to implement change in a system which simply is not working.

"Badger Bob" has put away his costume and appears to have emerged once again as "Redundant Robert". Watch out when he switches to contact lenses.

In a similar vein, has anyone heard from our newly-elected North Halton MPP, Noel Duignan lately?

Since his election Sept. 6, Mr. Duignan has provided one column of his activities.

The people of North Halton are your constituents, Mr. Duignan, they have a right to know of your activities on their behalf and similarly, your views on provincial matters which affect them.

Drop us a line sometime, okay Noel.

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Thanks to Mr. Spicer

Just to make sure there's no misunderstanding, let me make this clear right off the bat: I'm delighted that Keith Spicer has decided to save Canada.

After all, it's high time for SOMEBODY to save the country, and most of the logical candidates are unavailable for the job.

Sir John A. MacDonald's dead, Wayne Gretzky's in L.A., and you and I will be tied up this weekend winterizing the car.

If Mr. Spicer hadn't volunteered to save the nation, then it would presumably have been left to the politicians to take another stab. And we have a pretty shrewd suspicion where this would lead.

It would be time to rename the place North Idaho, and get on with memorizing the Pledge of Allegiance.

Even so, I've been left just a bit perplexed by the preliminary news reports on Mr. Spicer's quest.

Mr. Spicer, as you know, has been named by the government to head a citizens' committee on Canada's future. Mr. Spicer has proclaimed that his first priority is to seek nation-saving advice from "poets" and "ordinary Canadians."

As such, his first move was to hold community meetings in Tuktoyaktuk and Inuvik.

Well. This is, um... interesting. Just for starters, I'm a little dubious about this notion of seeking "ordinary Canadians" in Tuktoyaktuk. These are not or-



Ian Weir

Weir's View
Theorist News Service

inary Canadians. These are very cold Canadians.

Furthermore, I'm not too sure about this insistence on seeking the advice of "ordinary Canadians" in the first place - primarily because I've never been sure what this term means.

Politicians use the term frequently. But being called an "ordinary Canadian" sounds a lot like being defined as the two-legged version of generic-brand dishwashing detergent. Which kind of makes you wonder how Mr. Spicer plans to make his appeal to us.

"You, sir! You look bland and undistinguished. Tell me, how would YOU save the country?"

I'm also a little doubtful about placing priority on the advice of poets.

Now, I certainly have nothing against poets. I know several of them. They can be fine fellows, particularly when they're sober.

But if you're looking for someone who can restructure a political system, you'll probably find that poets are just slightly more qualified than, say, newspaper columnists.

I trust I need say no more on this point.

But it gets even more in-

teresting. According to the news reports, Mr. Spicer told the folks in Tuktoyaktuk that ordinary Canadians should let him know how they want his committee to solicit their advice - at community gatherings, at their places of work, or in their homes.

It's this third option that sets a few bells ringing, isn't it? Pause for a moment, and imagine that a panel of government appointees have announced their intention to come to your home to seek your advice on the Constitution.

Now try to imagine your response. Would you: a) bake cookies; b) bone up quickly on your constitutional history; or c) unchain the Rottweiler?

But most interesting of all was the response Mr. Spicer received when he solicited the opinion of Tuktoyaktuk resident Emmanuel Felix, described as a 70-year-old Inuvialuit hunter.

According to the news report: "Mr. Spicer, who told (Mr. Felix) that members of the Canadian family are fighting with each other and the government is searching for a way to end the quarrelling, was given a brief sermon on the value of spanking children who misbehave."

Hmm. It's pretty obvious whom Mr. Felix is referring to. And perhaps this really IS the best way to deal with the First Ministers.

Ah, well. We mustn't scoff or nitpick. Instead, let's wish Mr. Spicer all the best in his efforts to save the country.

After all, we have nothing to lose, do we?

If nothing else, this could stand as quite a colorful incident in the history of North Idaho.

Poets' Corner

THE BIRTHDAY GIFT

He said, "What do you want for your birthday?"

You haven't told me yet - I'd like to give you something But I don't know what to get. Would you like a dozen roses? Or a charm upon a chain? Or a bright canary in a cage That will sit with you and sing?"

I said I didn't want the flowers, Or a necklace or a pet What I wanted most of all I knew I'd never get.

He'd give me anything I asked Even the stars above - Yet he couldn't give What I wanted most - And that was just his love.

B. Brooke, Acton.

They laugh and play, With drugs and chances, Sticks and stones, Can break your bones, But drugs will always destroy you.

What kind of future are they planning? What kind of choices are they being given?

Life or death, Only they will choose, Their goal in life.

By Christine Deforest, Terra Cotta.

THIS EARTH

This earth was meant as a garden of Eden It's wonders and beauty untold After all life's a great purpose Of friendship and love we now hold

The freshness and beauty of the morning To enjoy it, rather than gold You can climb to the top of the mountain

To be able, is great, but bold Our dreams and ambitions we build for

It's the roots of success we are told

If we could live without pain or heartache

Life then would never grow old.

By Albert Brooks, Limehouse.

LIFE OF A CHILD

A long time ago, Childrens laughter could always be heard, Laughter caused from the joy of playing childrens games. And their dreams and plans, Unfold and blossom, But in todays society, Innocent gifts of life, Brought into a world of violence. Childrens games have changed,