

**Seniors**

**Mitch Hepburn remembered**

By FLORENCE WILKINSON  
Herald Special

On the morning when the local media was accusing the present Prime Minister of being cagey about his intentions as Secretary General of the United Nations, I attended a lecture titled Just Call Me Mitch. The lecturer is the author of a book which should be in the book stores by November - a book which he himself says may have more value as a physical exercise than an intellectual exercise (600 pages long). It was a very interesting and enlightening lecture.

For the younger generation "Mitch" is Mitch Hepburn, the premier of Ontario from 1934-1942. When other premiers were from the "Ivy League" atmosphere, Mitch was a socializer without education, who was in the House of Commons at the age of 26, and became leader of the Ontario Liberals at the age of 30 years.

The lecturer told us facts, now available, which substantiated things for which Mitch stood and for which he got bad press for years. Example: Evidence is now available to support his claim that the CIO was led by communists, and to give credence to his handling of the Oshawa strike. Other things mentioned by the lecturer were that Mitch led the first jurisdiction in Canada to have a balanced budget, and that he introduced compulsory pasteurization of milk. Even though about only five per cent of Ontario's milk was being used unpasteurized, it was causing a lot of disease in children and therefore the problem needed the cure.

My only memory of seeing Mitch was on a Sunday morning, as I waited for the rest of the family, as he stood under the maple tree in the cemetery and talked to - I do not remember who he was talking to, but I do remember his wonderful smile and his exuberant manner.

Up in my country - less than 30 miles from his country - the talk was about number 3 highway getting cement finish because it ran through his territory. There was not much mention of the fact that

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a very high percentage of the traffic on the highway was American, and that Mitch might just be aware of the need to develop public relations with our neighbors.

Since then, of course, the highway has been straightened, the cement changed to black top, and towns and cities avoided. The roads which we travelled - the Old Plank Road and the side road have long since been renewed and been given a hard top. The Plank Road, which was gravelled and always full of the kind of pot holes which led my brothers to constantly be saying, "You could sure ruin a tire if you hit that one just right," has become a provincial highway with some of the heaviest traffic in the province. The governments change, but the work seems to still go on. Roads are improved, safety in products on the market is an expected thing, unions have served their purpose and are becoming as much a part of the destructive establishment as any other establishment now is. Governments change, but the people go on!

It seems to me, as I think about Mitch - his accomplishments and his shortcomings which often got in his way with other politicians - as seen from today's perspective, especially by a man who has spent years reading all the

documents of the time which were only heresy when Mitch was Premier - and ponder the way in which what seemed so innovative in his day has now become commonplace, it underlines once again that government is really the people. The people have to choose the most capable and responsible candidates that they can, but even these elected members are not able to accomplish much without the vision and caring of the people in the constituency.

I am not, for one minute suggesting that leadership is not very important. I am just saying that in Canada we are still free to be the government if we want to, in spite of, and because of, the leadership which we elect. There is possibly only one "Mitch", but there are many others who have given their best to fulfil the responsibilities to which they have been called - and living goes on, changes happen and society grows at the speed in which society decides, regardless of what government does to serve us. If society is self-centred and self-fulfilling it will self-destruct regardless of what a government may do. If it is outgrowing and outreaching the government becomes a tool which helps this all happen. Thanks be for our freedom, our land and our leaders.

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