

The Independent & Free Press

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Who won?

Trying to determine who won Monday's federal election debate is akin to judging a figure skating competition—the beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Having said that, from our vantage point there was no real clear winner after the two and a half hours of verbal jousting mercifully ended. Jean Chretien avoided any disasters and likely won't see the Liberals' lead in the polls diminish significantly. Tory Leader Jean Charest, Reform's Preston Manning and Alexa McDonough of the NDP, all did what they had to do, which was attack Chretien. Bloc Quebecois leader Gilles Duceppe was there for the free air time and little else.

However, despite the fact there were no knockout punches landed, viewers were treated to a good look at the five candidates vying for the nation's top job.

Herewith is a critique of the five combatants:

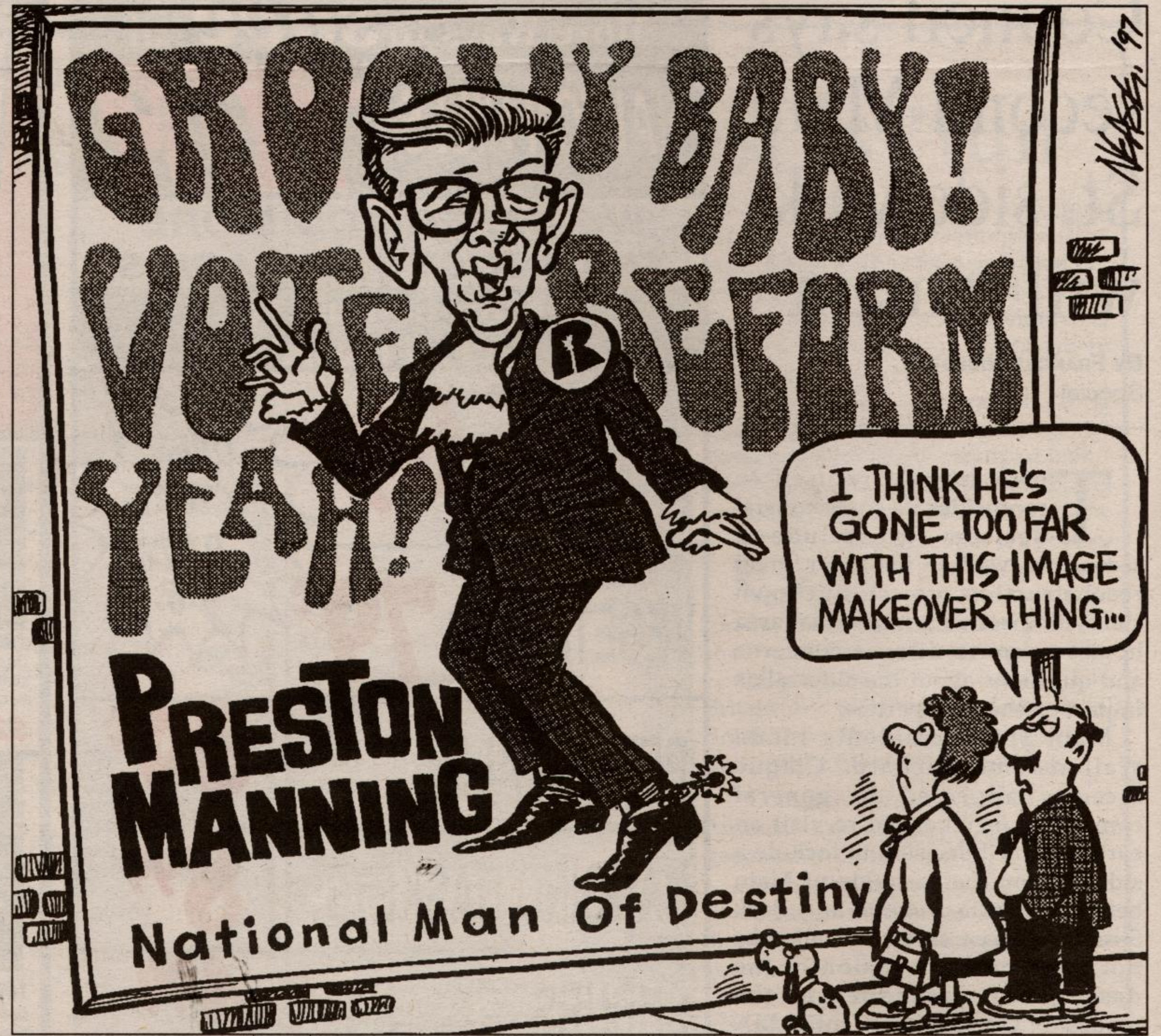
Jean Chretien: The PM looked very stiff as he read his opening remarks but found his stride later in the first hour. He was at his best when taking on Duceppe but spent most of his time trying to dodge the shots of Charest, Manning and McDonough. For the most part he escaped unscathed.

Jean Charest: The Tory boss was by far the most relaxed of the five in front of the camera and scored heavily when the issue of national unity came up. He lost viewers when he tried to explain federal-provincial transfer payments and some tax items but he looked more prime ministerial than the others.

Preston Manning: The Reform's main man issued plenty of challenges to the other candidates (which they deftly avoided) and scored some solid points on Chretien over the deficit and job creation. However, try as he might, he can't help but look and sound too much like the teacher you didn't like in Grade 6.

Alexa McDonough: This was McDonough's coming out party and she didn't embarrass herself, but often the good points she tried to make went for naught because she was too shrill or was drowned out by Charest or Manning. Still, Canadians got their first good look at who's leading the NDP.

Gilles Duceppe: The BQ boss looked every bit the Blothead. The worst of the bunch.



Big Brothers say 'thanks'

Dear editor,

Big Brothers of Halton would like to extend our thanks to the Halton Hills community. Due to the kindness, generosity and commitment received from the men of your area, we can now re-open our waiting list.

The waiting list of boys from father-absent homes waiting for a Big Brother had been closed until recently due to the length of time children in Halton Hills were waiting to be matched. Boys matched over the last few months have been waiting from one to four years for their Big Brother.

There has been an outpouring of support from Halton Hills recently that has allowed our staff the opportunity to provide these boys with the positive male role model they need. We would now like to encourage individuals to call our agency if they have a son who may be in need of a special friend.

Volunteers commit to the program for a period of one year, however most friendships last longer. The agency can also be a link for families who may feel isolated from resources in their area that they and their children may be able to benefit from.

We have a variety of special events and activities throughout the year that all matched and unmatched children can participate in.

Please call to speak to a caseworker today. We look forward to hearing from you. Once again, thank you Halton Hills!

Susan Ormith,
Big Brothers of Halton

Letter of the day

Families thank 'special people'

Dear editor,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank some special people.

Our daughters were involved in a car accident on Mountainview Road, April 13. Their injuries were extensive and due to the efforts and concerns of the Halton Hills police and ambulance attendants, this dreadful occurrence was made more bearable.

We would also like to give special thanks to an unidentified volunteer firefighter who was on the scene instantly and helped stabilize the girls. His help was invaluable. Thanks also to doctors and staff at Georgetown Hospital and Hospital for Sick Children.

Now that the thanks has been given, I would also like to mention the fact that this tragedy could have been avoided if notice had been taken of the traffic situation on Mountainview Road. New subdivisions, new bridge, four lanes of traffic, no recourse for existing residents.

Darlene Hachey, The Hachey and Cuthbert families, Georgetown

Computer donation is much appreciated

Dear editor,

On behalf of the Georgetown Bread Basket food bank, I would like to take this opportunity to thank B.R.W. Heating and Cooling for their donation of a complete computer system and work station.

The Bread Basket relies almost entirely upon the kindness and generosity of local businesses and the people of Halton Hills. It is uplifting to see

local companies return some of their profits back to those who need it most, the disadvantaged, the unemployed and the hungry of our community. The addition of a computer system will enable us to provide greater assistance to our clients and afford us the opportunity to network with other foodbanks in the GTA.

Mike Foley director,
Georgetown Bread Basket

Our Readers Write

The Independent & Free Press welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. All letters must be signed and include an address and a daytime telephone number. Letters can be mailed, delivered to our office address at 211 Armstrong Ave., Georgetown, Ont., L7G 4X5, faxed to us at (905) 873-0398 or e-mailed to: independent.freepress@aztec-net.com