

Turner's not the only one with problems **Carey Nieuwhof**

Oh the glories of a leadership battle. The political intrigue, plots and subplots, the best minds of a party pitted against one another. Who's kidding who? It's a pile of fun as long as you're not the one who loses.

Political junkies love leadership battles. This is where politicians roll up their sleeves and become consistently unpredictable. They are almost better than elections. In elections, trends are predictable, and enemy lines are drawn on boring historical patterns. In leadership battles, you can watch a party divide, kick itself in the teeth, and then reunite for the next election. Or so it's supposed to.

No this isn't another in the never ending series of John Turner sagas. This column is about the prime minister, and the quiet leadership battle that is waiting for a key moment to break out in public.

The Tories have been historically famous for never ending their leadership races. As soon as one leadership convention ends, another begins. The losers in the most recent contest never accept defeat, and continue to fight and plot against their newly elected martyr.

When Brian Mulroney was elected Conservative leader in 1983, the party never really healed. There was a large contingent of "Clarkie" that never forgave Brian for secretly plotting against Joe. But then September

1984 happened, and the world became a different place for discontented Tories.

All of a sudden, and years of opposition, they were in government with a minimum four year term. Power drowned the upset Clarkies, and Brian all of a sudden felt a united party rally to his side. Rightly so.

Superjaw had just won a historic majority. The awful, corrupt and arrogant Liberals (to Tory eyes anyway) had been reduced to a tiny rump barely visible for the mighty benches of government. Two hundred and eleven Tories on the Hill, and their supporters across the country stood back and inhaled the sweet fragrance of power. Then the inevitable happened, the party has to begin to govern. And Brian's woes began to grow.

Mulroney has a superficially united party on his hands at present. It's two years into the mandate, and Brian is still the prime minister. However, it has become increasingly over-obvious that things should not all be well in the Tory house.

No need to go into the list of scandals that have hit the Mulroney government. I believe this newspaper has limits on how long my column can be, and to list the scandals would violate that. Anyway, after many resignations, much criticism over Mulroney's blatant affection for the pork barrel, and numerous other afflictions Mulroney's government suffers from, discontent across the country is going.

With the NDP only two points behind the Tories in the polls, it wouldn't surprise me to find many caucus members upset with many of the government actions which have brought on their slip in the polls. How much longer can this go on without any serious questions about Mulroney's leadership?

My guess is that the caucus and party members in general will begin to exert a great deal of pressure on Mulroney to clean up his act. An election is only two years off while the public's political memory is short, it's long enough to remember blatant violations of public faith — something of which the Mulroney government is guilty.

It takes no genius to know that when the public begins to heap coals on a party, the party members begin to heap coals upon the leader. What we may soon have, is an unofficial leadership race to succeed Mulroney.

There won't be anything serious until after the next election. If Mulroney wins a small majority in the next election, there will be open pressure for him to retire and allow a new leader to take over. If Mulroney wins a minority, the opposition forces will likely conduct a low key campaign to get him out. If Mulroney can keep the party relatively stable in the polls, the opposition will be quiet, but if he is at 31 per cent in the polls three years from now, then expect a loud complaint from the caucus.

If Mulroney loses the next election, you can

expect a bitter outcry against Mulroney, and an almost assured resignation on his part. Men like Perrin Beatty, now the defence minister, have not been dragged down in the scandal ridden government. The 35-year-old minister definitely will want a run at the leadership. Who else may? Barbara McDougall is ambitious. John Crosbie? It would be a laugh. Maybe Pat Carney would want a shot at the job. In short, there are at least a dozen people who are thinking about taking a stab at the leadership sooner or later. Clearly, not everyone can be pleased with the way the government has been run.

If the Tories continue to bottom out in the polls, the taste of power may not be enough to keep the discontented ones quiet. There likely is a leadership race of sorts now in Ottawa. The reason we haven't heard about it is because the Tories are not yet doomed to lose the next election. But should signs point to a loss becoming inevitable, then expect a quiet underground campaign to get off the ground.

The Liberals have always claimed to have a policy which requires loyalty to the leader. However, they have always been very loyal to their prime ministers. The Tories have never been loyal to their leader, and if Brian Mulroney continues on his present course, then loyalty to the prime minister in the Tory party, may well be tossed out the window.

Senior Scutterbutt

by Ed Pearson

Vet remembers with the best of them

On Tuesday I fell in with the other vets, outside the Legion Hall on Queen Street, to march to the cenotaph for the Remembrance Day service. Sergeant-at-Arms Dave Bell coaxed us into some semblance of order. As we moved off we were not a pretty sight. Most of us were on the limp and others carried stomachs that, evidently, had lost the post-war battle of the bulge. The beret, on a young man, can be dashing and soldier-like. On the older man it contrives to give him a po-faced appearance. As we turned onto King Street, the band, under the direction of Pipe Major Bill Donaldson, tried to put some starch into our stagger by striking up with Tunes of Glory.

Climbing the hill I wondered how our former enemies spent this day. Did they feel the need to remember those dark war days? Do they feel the need to be consoled for the hardships that they endured in a losing cause? Most of them, I am sure, can rationalise their involvement in the war. I would not object to marching with them. If they are good enough to be Canadians, they are good enough to honour the day with dignity. Some might say that it would be an insult to our dead. If there is a Valhalla for fallen warriors, I bet there is a whole lot of fraternisation going on.

I wondered how do conscientious objectors feel on this day? I have nothing against C.O.'s. I figure that they represented my right to object if I wanted to. I had a friend who was a conscientious objector. He had fought in the Spanish Civil War and had been wounded. He would not have been required to fight but he registered his objection on principle. He was sent to do farm work.

Others who had pre-empted the war against Fascists by fighting in Spain were denied the right to continue the fight in the major conflict because they had fought on the Republic side and may have been con-

taminated by their contact with Communists. Our Masters are not always easily understood.

C.O.'s were sometimes used as stretcher bearers. Stretcher bearers in the Australian Army won more medals for bravery than any other branch of the service. Mahatma Gandhi, the man of peace who met such a violent death, a man who was a thorn in the side of the British Empire, was a stretcher bearer for the British Army during the Boer War. British CO's were often banished to work in the coal mines for the duration of the (then) present emergency. Working eight hours a day in the bowels of the earth would hold more terrors for me than descending to the depths in a submarine or taking part in a bayonet charge. I would be proud to march with those CO's.

We arrived at Little Lake Park and formed a square around the cenotaph. I guess we were all alone with our thoughts. I thought about Victor Sylvester. For those not acquainted, Victor was a suave, urbane, dance leader in the Lawrence Welk mold. With his strict tempo trio he tried to teach ballroom dancing over BBC radio between the wars. He had been a private soldier during the First World War. This man, with music in his heart, confessed later in his life that he was haunted by the memories of the five British soldiers, accused of desertion or cowardice, he had been obliged to shoot while serving as a member of the regimental firing squad. He was so sickened by this senseless slaughter that he had to be restrained from deserting himself and perhaps meeting the same fate. I reflected on the system that elevated a commanding officer to the power of life and death over men entrusted to his care.

We had a different arrangement during the Second World War. Some airmen who were unable to bring themselves to continue fly-

ing on operations were reduced to the ranks and had the letters LMF (Lack of moral fibre) stamped on their records.

While I was attending Air Gunnery School I noticed a young airman with no rank cleaning windows at the station. He wore pilot's wings. He had been branded L.M.F. Flying on operations against the enemy he had lost his courage, just as other men lost arms or legs. Some mindless commanding officer, in collusion with a bloody minded medical officer, had decided that this airman lacked moral fibre. The grounded airman refused to take down his wings, which brought attention to his situation, and cleaned windows with dignity. I am not sure that he was not employed at an air training station to serve as an example to us of what would happen to us if we failed to meet our Masters' expectations. I thought about him and hoped that his mental wounds had healed.

I was brought back to Midland by seeing, out of the corner of my eye, a fine young cadet swaying in the ranks as he tried to overcome a fainting spell that was about to engulf him. Lieutenant Jack LaBrie, with a proper concern for his men, broke ranks and ran to support the lad before he collapsed in a heap. He was in time and led the lad away.

There was no Silver Cross Mother at this year's ceremony. I thought about my own mother, the calmest of women, a real unflappable British Mum. She contrived to keep my Dad and her eight children well fed throughout the war, no mean feat in wartime London. I didn't really appreciate my mother until later in life when I lay in bed after midnight worrying about my teenage son who was out in the family car. I wondered how my mother felt about her teenage son who was out after dark in the government's four engined airplane.



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