

Local MP a big player now in Ottawa scene

Doug Lewis has been North Simcoe's member of Parliament for nine years. Since his appointment to Cabinet almost a year ago, Lewis has been the minister of state for Treasury Board. He is also the government's deputy House leader.

Being Deputy-Prime Minister Don Mazankowski's assistant has put the MP in the forefront of parliamentary procedure and has meant frequent questions from leading newspapers and appearances on news programs such as The Journal and Canada A.M.

He was interviewed by a reporter for the Midland Times/Penetang-Citizen last Wednesday afternoon in his constituency office on Dominion Avenue. Looking relaxed in grey polo shirt, Lewis exuded confidence and didn't appear rushed despite the long list of meetings he had waiting for the duration of the afternoon.

Times/Citizen (referring to a recently published

story by Southam News): Is it true you jog every morning?

Lewis: I get in early in the morning but mostly I jog in the afternoon. It all depends. In July it was

House flowing smoothly. We made a conscious decision two years ago, that we were going to get control of our agenda and the House. That requires a lot of hands-on and delegation at

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every fourth day. I do it 50 per cent for my body and 50 per cent for my head. It's a way to relax; I don't time myself. I have a set pace and a set distance.

Times/Citizen: Can you describe your working relationship with House leader Dan Mazankowski?

Lewis: Well, both as his parliamentary secretary and his minister of state, my job really is to try to make as many decisions for him the way he would have made them so that he's freed up to do his job as deputy prime minister, to keep the business of the

same time. So far, it's worked pretty well; he's a hard working guy and easy to get along with. And he's behind me every time I make a decision, no question about it. It's been a terrific working relationship because we're right where all the action is. It's worked out pretty well.

Times/Citizen: Would you say since you've been deputy House leader that you have been successful in controlling what's been called the political agenda, or has it been more the Opposition or the media?

Lewis: It took some time

for us, we hadn't been there for 20 years; it took some time for them to find where the levers were. That happens to everyone. So we got control of the levers and put the right people in the right places. And our agenda over the last two years, under Don (Mazankowski), we've been able to control. That plus the fact that the Opposition has completely abandoned any effort to pursue issues: except to be "anti," they don't have any alternatives.

Times/Citizen: The Opposition was initially somewhat strangling the government's initiatives; have they backed off somewhat?

Lewis: Don and I, our style is to try to co-operate with them. We've got to do what we've got to do; they've got to do what they've got to do.

We incorporated a parliamentary maneuver which was there for us to do; let's just say there was some reluctance to do it before. But by extending the hours we would achieve the same purpose as cutting off debate. So we started extending the hours. We started saying at five to five, "We're going to work 'til we're finished tonight to finish this section of that bill." It's hard to argue with that. They were seen as stopping the House from doing a little overtime and their position certainly became untenable.

Times/Citizen: Has there been any resentment, either amongst the government or the Opposition, to staying throughout the summer months?

Lewis: A lot of resentment from the Opposition because they had screwed us around a lot in June and delayed things and they thought that they would be able to go home on June 30 and say, "Well we stopped free trade and we stopped all this other legislation by just stalling." Too bad, not everyone has 10 weeks holidays. We don't expect 10 weeks holidays, so we worked a little overtime.

Times/Citizen: So how has being deputy House leader increased your workload? Can you describe an average working day?

Lewis: I usually get in around 7:15 a.m. and I read the newspapers and I get my head in the media. By 8:15 I'm watching Canada A.M. and I'm doing that sort of thing. I have a French lesson from 8 to 9 and then meetings start at 9:15 a.m. and I get together with our staff and we discuss what's going to happen that day, what's happening in the committees. It's limited to 15 minutes.

There's a Question Period briefing session at 1:30 p.m. and that's chaired by either Don or myself where we go over

the potential items of that day, put our comments together ... Question Period from 2 to 3 ... then we get back on debate and once we're back on debate I usually go for a run. Caucus meetings are on Tuesday night where we report on what we've done and where we're going. I aim to see the national news at home or there. Monday to Thursday it's that way.

Times/Citizen: You've been described as a workaholic. Is that accurate?

Lewis: A bit of a workaholic but more of an actionaholic. I like the action. Opposition is deadly in that you're always criticizing.

When we've got unemployment in this area at three per cent and everything coming together, that's the sort of action I like.

Times/Citizen: Will free trade benefit all of Canada?

Lewis: It'll benefit all of Canada, either directly or indirectly. In the manufacturing sectors, such as Ontario, no question about it; directly in the raw materials that we send south. Out of this deal we have a dispute settlement mechanism: we've got one, whereas right now we don't have one. I think

done it. Just go down the street there; all those people did it. We set an environment. We said we're going to try and cut down government spending, we're going to reduce the bureaucracy ... we're going to privatize. We create the environment and the people do it. You can't do that with make-work projects.

I think in the next election, free trade will be one of the issues, it'll be an important issue. John Turner says, "Let the people decide." Let the people decide if they want to go back to double digit inflation, if tearing up the free trade agreement is a viable alternative. I don't think it will wash.

Times/Citizen: You mentioned John Turner. What are your personal feelings and those of the government on the way that Turner wants to use the Senate to block the free trade legislation?

Lewis: My personal feelings are shared by government members. It's the last desperate lunge from a man who's drowning. His numbers are bad and they're going to get worse. John Turner's trying to split that 40 per cent (of those opposed to free trade) with Ed Broadbent. This is a desperate effort to get as much of that 40 per cent as he can.

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we'll be able to refine that in time.

Times/Citizen: One of the anti-free trade forces seems to be the so-called Canadian nationalists. Do you think they represent Canada as a whole?

Lewis: They represent their own interests. I'm amazed that Mel Hurtig (the president of the Council of Canadians) has the time to get involved in the free trade debate because he spends so much time putting in applications to the government for grants - and getting them - that I wonder that he has the time to spend on free trade. You can't have sovereignty while you have 12 per cent of your workforce out of work. People who wrap themselves in the flag and say, "I like the status quo it's so warm and comfortable," are forgetting something. There is no status quo anymore. The status quo is gone.

Times/Citizen: Would you describe the next election as a choice between free enterprise and a return to the old system of government?

Lewis: Absolutely. We haven't done it as a government. The people have

So now I understand the plan is that they're going to negotiate separate free trade agreements with the U.S. and other countries. Terrific idea. And the Liberal thinking on this is, "We don't want to put all our eggs in one basket." Eight out of 10 trading eggs are in one basket.

Times/Citizen: With a majority of people in Quebec supporting free trade do we see a political realignment in that province based on ideology, not language?

Lewis: Yes. Now they're very heavily in business. There's an emerging business class in Quebec that wants to compete.

Times/Citizen: Do you think Ontario is becoming increasingly isolated over free trade, or is the Liberal government?

Lewis: I think if Ontario were really against it, they'd be pulling out all the stops. I see no signs whatsoever that the Ontario government is pulling out all the stops ... I mean taking every advantage to knock free trade.

Times/Citizen: You mean they're only saying as much as they have to to show loyalty to the federal party?

Lewis: Absolutely. **Are you confident that a majority of people in Simcoe North will agree with you?**

Lewis: I think there's majority support there.



Times/Citizen: Was it a gamble to fight an election on free trade?

Lewis: This isn't going to be a one-issue campaign. There's just one question to ask: "Are you or are you not a lot better off than you were in 1984?"

Times/Citizen: So you're not going to be pushed into fighting this election on free trade alone.

Lewis: I'm not afraid to but I've got a whole lot more arrows in my quiver than free trade. What are they going to do differently on child care ... tax reform?

Times/Citizen: Can you win the next election without a majority of seats in Ontario?

Lewis: I feel confident we will win the next election and win a majority of seats in Ontario. It's coming around slowly.

Times/Citizen: Let's shift to the Conservative Party. A two-part question about the Official Languages Act: how do you feel about its scope and has it put the language issue behind the Conservatives?

Lewis: I'm satisfied that the Official Languages Act, as revised by us, does three things: it guarantees every person in Canada the right to a trial in the language of their choice; where there's sufficient demand a citizen can deal with the federal government in the language of his choice - where there's sufficient demand; in certain regions of Canada you should be able to work in both official languages. As to whether or not we or any other party has the language issue behind us, the answer is no.

Times/Citizen: Should the role of government in the economy be decreasing?

Lewis: Absolutely. We've shown that by deficit control and privatization.

Times/Citizen: What about your future? Do you have any long-term goals in government that you'd like to achieve?

Lewis: I'd like to come back as a Cabinet minister in a majority government.

Times/Citizen: Thank you Mr. Lewis.

Lewis: My pleasure.



Fort survey expanding

Trenches are being extended to either side of Sainte-Marie II to find remains of the outbuildings which archeologist Bill Finlayson has concluded stood adjacent to the stone walled fort. Finlayson, left, updated MP Doug Lewis, right, on progress, during the MP's visit to Christian Island last week.