

PROFILES

NEPEAN—CARLETON GLENGARRY—PRESCOTT—RUSSELL

How does it feel to come up against Mr. Invincible?

Walter Baker's opponents in this federal election campaign know they have their work cut out for them just to make a respectable showing in Nepean-Carleton.

Nobody in the Conservative government — including Prime Minister Joe Clark — has a higher profile in the riding than Mr. Baker who is president of the Privy Council, minister of revenue, and government house leader.

And nobody — except a few jaded Opposition critics — would dare suggest that Mr. Baker hasn't represented the riding commendably since first elected Conservative MP in the old riding of Grenville-Carleton eight years ago.

Not only does he do his riding homework well enough to sway votes that otherwise would be committed to the Liberals and New Democrats, but Mr. Baker has also established a reputation as one of the country's more competent and outspoken politicians.

In the electoral battle last May 22, which saw the Conservative Party handed the reigns of government, Mr. Baker's constituents rewarded his work with a

19,627 vote plurality over his closest opponent, Liberal Bluma Appel.

In this contest, his main challengers are Liberal Gordon Hunter and NDPer Alan White. Even a Rhinoceros has entered the fray, providing comic relief and making the occasional salient point.

The Rhino is Alan White, 26, who opposes capital punishment because residents of the Capital don't deserve to be punished.

Like other Conservative standard-bearers, Mr. Baker is being called upon to defend his party's stated policy of implementing stern measures — including an 18-cent per gallon gas tax hike — in order to make Canada energy self-sufficient and to chop the \$10 billion federal deficit in half.

Canadians will have to take bitter financial medicine from a Tory government, the Nepean-Carleton MP insists; there's no real alternative to get the country on its feet and keep it there. He faults the Liberal Party for slamming the doors on government at a crucial stage.

Mr. Baker, a lawyer and Parkwood Hills resident, also backs the Conservative plan to eliminate 60,000 jobs from the public service. He stresses that

there will be no layoffs, that the cut will be accomplished through attrition.

A burning local issue only eight months ago, the proposed government staff reduction is drawing scant attention this time despite the fact the riding contains Nepean, a public service hotbed.

With most of the riding's 73,000 eligible voters living in Nepean, that's where the fight will be won or lost. The battle lines have been drawn along Merivale Road.

As usual, residents of the riding's outlying communities such as Metcalfe, Osgoode, and Greely are participating from a distance.

Although the Liberal Party has toned down Pierre Trudeau's leadership on the national front, Mr. Hunter has raised the issue in Nepean-Carleton, suggesting that Mr. Trudeau has better credentials than Prime Minister Joe Clark.

Mr. White, a Richmond teacher, is promising lower interest rates and reduced energy costs under a New Democratic government.

GLENGARRY- PRESCOTT-RUSSELL.

Eight months later, and they're back on the hustings.

Denis, Gordon, young Gary. There's a newcomer along this time as well Claude Dion of Sarsfield.

Without any real effort, Denis Ethier is leading the way. Gordon Johnson is a distant second and Gary O'Brien is bringing up the rear. Claude has settled in third place, just like the New Democratic Party candidate the last time around.

Except for the occasional fling with Conservatism, a Liberal is always the front-runner. During the past 18 years, that Liberal has been an Ethier, first Viateur and then brother Denis, who resides at Dalkeith.

And, except for those rare times when the Liberal and Conservative switch positions, a Tory always places second. Gordon Johnson, now of Hawkesbury, will make it twice in a row Feb. 18.

An NDPer always comes in third and there's always a fringe candidate along for the ride, — an Independent, a Creditist, or something — to make it a four-some.

Twenty-one year-old Gary O'Brien is along again this time, just as he was in the May 22 campaign, to present the views of the Marxist-Leninist party.

Making this campaign more predictable than usual is the fact it follows the last one by only eight months. It's even more difficult to work up enthusiasm about the predictable when it occurs so frequently.

So Denis, Gordon, Claude, and Gary are gladhanding their way from all-candidates meetings to coffee klatches searching out those elusive votes — elusive, that is, unless you're a Liberal.

That's a lot of travelling. Glengarry-Scott-Russell stretches from just north of the St. Lawrence River in the south-east, wraps around Stormont-Dundas to the south, and encompasses part of Cumberland Township in the west. The eastern boundary is Quebec and to the north, the Ottawa River.

There's light industry scattered through the riding — Hawkesbury, Rockland, Embrun — and a few major manufacturers — like Canadian International Paper at Hawkesbury, but the riding is primarily agricultural, and the candidates direct much of their policies to farmers.

Mr. Johnson has to defend his

party's stand on stabilizing the economy and making Canada energy self-sufficient through such tough measures as an 18-cent increase in the excise tax on gasoline.

If every implemented, Tory policies will hit farmers hard, the other candidates warn. Mr. O'Brien, a University of Ottawa student and Hull resident, says farmers and everyone else would benefit if the government assumed control of monopolies.

As usual, a secondary issue is Mr. Ethier's performance as an MP, with the Conservative and NDP candidates accusing the member of being invisible between elections.

Mr. Dion, who operates a beef farm along with commuting to his job in Ottawa with the Public Service Alliance of Canada, states categorically that the Liberal incumbent has done nothing for the riding.

Mr. Johnson, who owned a nursing home at Limoges before selling it and moving to Hawkesbury last October, maintains that only the popularity of Liberal leader Pierre Trudeau has kept Mr. Ethier in his seat.

But these insults roll off Mr. Ethier like water off a duck's back. He replies that his constituents know he doing a fine job, a statement that's hard to refute in light of the vote spread last May: Ethier, 27, 124; Johnson, 9,997; and the NDP's Paul de Broeck, 4,163.

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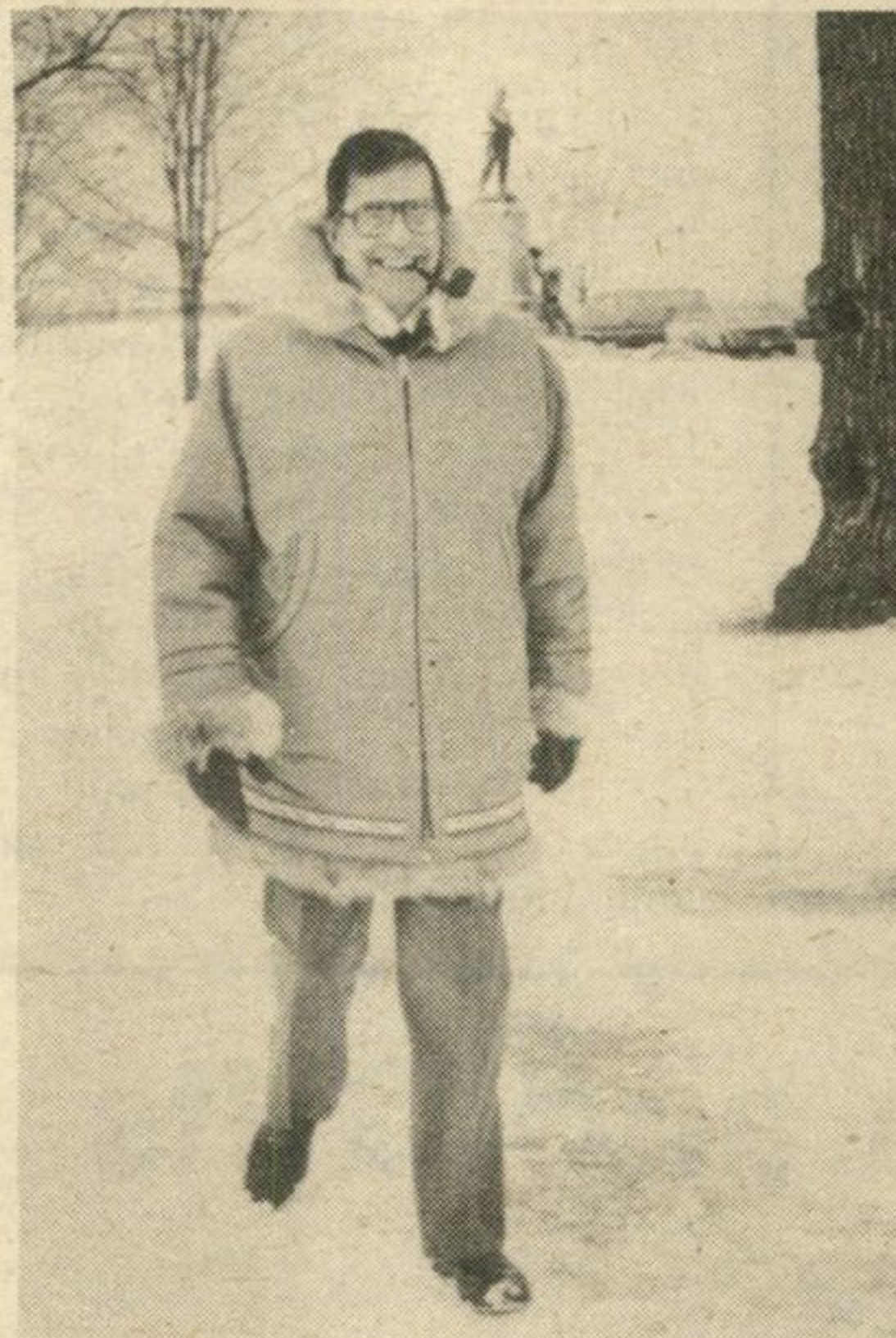
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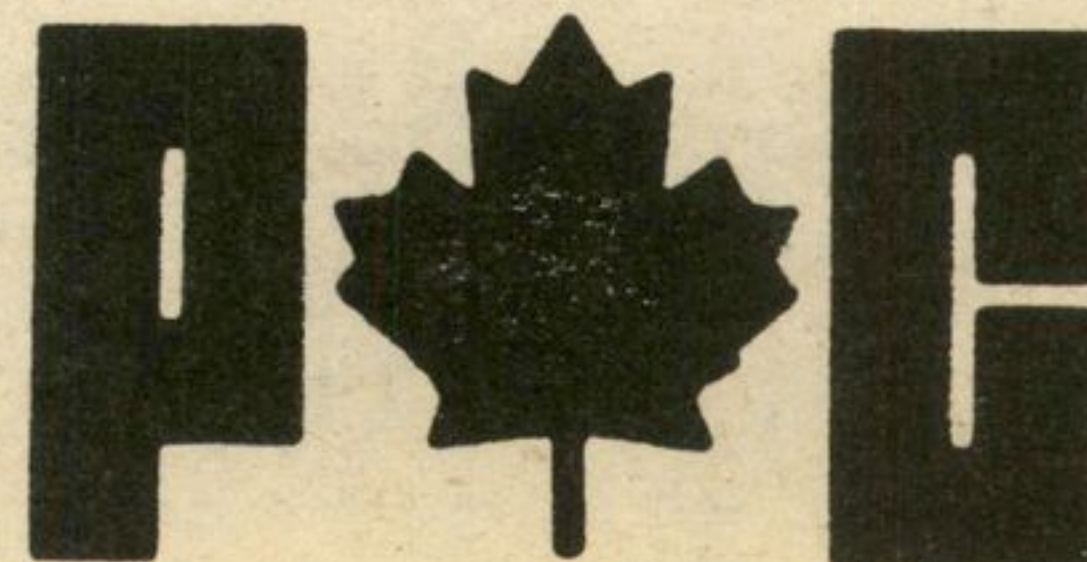
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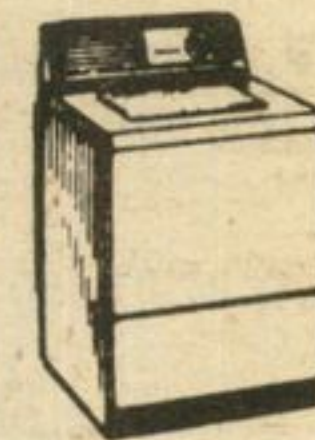
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