

Your Opinion

Politicians don't have all the answers for society

Tuesday, October 27, 1:00 a.m. The beginning of the morning after. There has been an eerie mood abroad in the land, with conflicting emotions of ecstasy, anger and anxiety competing for supremacy. Saturday night (Oct. 24), I saw blue television lights all up and

"Canadians have told us that politicians don't have all the answers. Politicians have to listen seriously to what Canadians are saying." On a similar theme, pollster Michael Adams of Environics said "politicians have only been getting half of the message from voters. Yes,

the negotiators glancing backwards over their shoulders from time to time wondering whether Canadians really said "no" on October 26 to the principle of aboriginal self-government, or just "no" to the Charlottetown Accord.

But the real challenge has been thrown to those of us in regions like Northern Ontario who voted no, to come up with new suggestions for where we go from here. I suggest we start right here, to work out our own destiny. As I suggested a couple columns ago, we should convene constituent assemblies with a mandate to draw up "municipal constitutions" or "vision statements" that make sense for each community. The on-going process of developing aboriginal self-government will require bands to go through that kind of a process. Why not have non-native communities go through a similar process?

If as Canadians we are indeed destined to spend a lot of our time debating how we want to govern ourselves, why not start at the grass roots level and draw up constitutions for our city, town and township governments? We could set a deadline on the discussions by insisting that a package be prepared for a vote to coincide with the municipal elections in November 1994.

We can start that process now, without waiting for our disgraced provincial and federal leaders' to make the next move. Politicians, indeed, do

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**NORTHERN
INSIGHTS**

by Larry Sanders



down my street, then heard cheers break out as the Blue Jays finally won Game 6 of the World Series. By Monday morning (Oct. 26), the party atmosphere had faded and the orange and black decorations of an approaching Halloween were more evident. Monday was also voting day—the third time in 125 years Canadians went to the polls for something other than a national election.

The results are now in. Ontario has narrowly voted yes, by a margin of less than 10,000 votes. Twenty-eight thousand spoiled and rejected ballots likely made the difference in Ontario. Only Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and the Eastern Arctic joined Ontario in the "yes" column. Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon and the western Arctic all said no.

Brian Mulroney has announced that "the Charlottetown Accord is history." Bob Rae has said "it's obvious I won't be going back to the constitutional table until at least after the next federal election."

Ominously, Ovide Mercredi of the Assembly of First Nations has said "Canadians blew it. We've said yes to the status quo, which is racist. We can't wait any longer for you (non-native people) to accept us. We have to move ahead to a different level to enforce our rights. We have law-making ability in our own territory, we should use it. We can also take our case to international forums to secure our rights." Even more belligerently, Ron George of the Native Council of Canada has warned us to look for "more Okas, more barricades. You've kept apartheid alive in Canada." Mary Kuptana, the chief constitutional negotiator for the Inuit of the eastern Arctic, was more accommodating. "We can still move ahead—politically, not constitutionally—to secure agreements with Ottawa and the provinces on self-government."

But my award for the best line of the night goes to Liberal leader Jean Chretien, who interpreted the vote by saying

voters are saying 'get on with the economy.' but voters have also been saying to the politicians to devise new systems for making decisions. The old ways don't work any more."

The other main message for me from the night was the big discrepancy between the voting trend in Northern Ontario and the rest of the province. Thunder Bay–Nipigon, Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Kenora–Rainy River ridings voted by more than two to one against the Charlottetown Accord. The exception was in Cochrane–Superior Riding, where the "no" side won by a margin of just over 100 votes. In Northern Ontario as a whole, the rejection rate was 67 per cent. Metro Toronto ridings, by contrast, went the opposite direction: 57 per cent yes.

The constitutional hassle as such will now no doubt be laid to rest for a few months, until after a federal election and a provincial election in Quebec. Aboriginal self-government negotiations will continue, perhaps with new urgency, with

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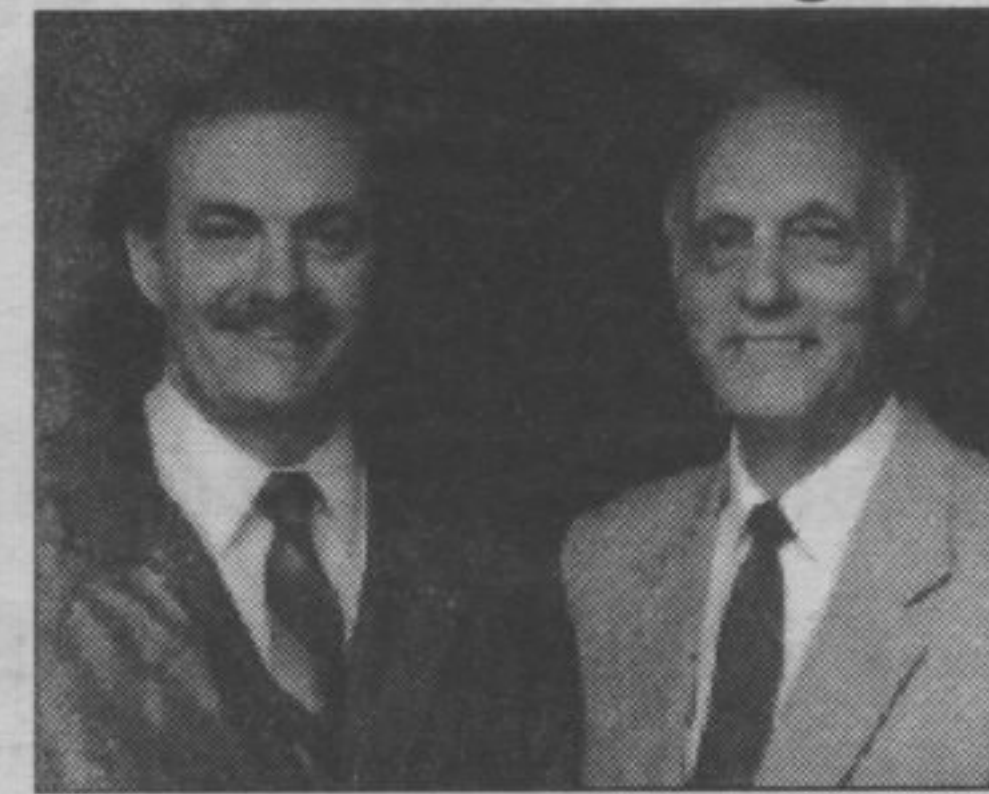
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Wally & Guy.



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