

'How to get elected' reviewed

By J. DAVID MILLER

This Christmas I was given half a dozen books, among which were two on the general subject of politics. This review is directed particularly towards Arthur Doyle's latest effort *How to get elected-Governor Plumbtree's practical rules for politicians*. The other book I refer to is called *Vote for Love* by Nannette Newman. *Vote For Love* is a collection of sayings of English schoolchild-

ren concerning politicians. Bruce, age eight, states "A prime minister is so busy he doesn't have time to think."

That is certainly the message one gets about politics after reading Doyle's book. At first reading, I wasn't sure at all whether *How to get elected* is a serious book. First off, it is written in such a way as to appeal to the American market in this pre-election year. The only concession to Canada, it seems, is that words

like colour are spelled in the Queen's english. In addition, the author seems to be locked in a death struggle with a comic side and a serious side of his subject. The book pretends to be for fun.

It isn't. *How to get elected*, I decided second time around, is dead serious. Hidden among the haysed language are bits of Machiavellian philosophy. Further, American politics is generally thought to be more corrupt than our own. Thus, second reading

allowed a healthy dose of Canadian chauvanism to seep through, adding to the pleasure. In 190 pages, the fictitious Governor Plumbtree dictates 36 rules which, if religiously followed, will guarantee election.

A glossary at the back of the book defines a politician as "any person who gets elected to office." (As opposed to a professional politician - a term used to describe the politician's opponent.) However, the 36 rules are also of

interest to us "voters" (an enfranchised person who has been led to believe that it is to his advantage to cast a ballot.) This book is damn useful in figuring out politics. My study of the Governor's rules helped me to understand politics lately here at UNB.

For example, rule number three: "The politician always appears to be dedicated only to the public welfare," and eight: "The politician is a great entertainer" explains the great success of THE campus politician during my time at UNB - Steve Berube. The Governor remarks "For the politician the trick is to become known not as a huckster, but in a way that makes him look more sincere and trustworthy than his opponent. That's what wins. That's what the people are looking for-somebody they can trust." If anyone looks sincere and trustworthy, Steve does, and he is entertaining too!

Rule number ten declares "The politician proclaims lofty principles." The Governor explains that "The politician makes liberal use of 'principles'. He knows voters believe principles to be laws proclaimed by great men and by God himself as infallible guideposts for conducting human affairs. To violate a principle is to risk offending everything that is good and sacred. However, the politician knows there is endless confusion over just what a principle is and what it is not. Because of this confusion he defends his arguments simply by quoting any one of the thousands of 'principles' which have been proclaimed through the ages." Ah ha! I thought, this explains the liberal use of various 'principles' by the Board of Deans last fall!

Even the results of the recent SRC elections were explained by the Governor. Rule 13 - "The politician says nothing when in doubt." It used to be the practice of American presidential hopefuls to say nothing once nominated. "Silent Cal" Coolidge said, after his successful 1924 campaign, "I found early in life you don't have to explain something you haven't said." Silent Perry, we can call him. Doug, on the other hand flouted rule number 14 - "The politician dodges the issues," according to the Governor "because every vote counts, the politician takes it as axiomatic that he must always appear to agree with everybody." To begin with this means he avoids saying or doing anything that is controversial.

I found *How to get elected* a good laugh on one level and a useful guide to political activity on another. It is not as well edited as perhaps it should have been, but then again, it could be that the book strives to follow rule number seven. "The politician is thoroughly human."

Arthur Doyle is UNB Director of Alumni Affairs.

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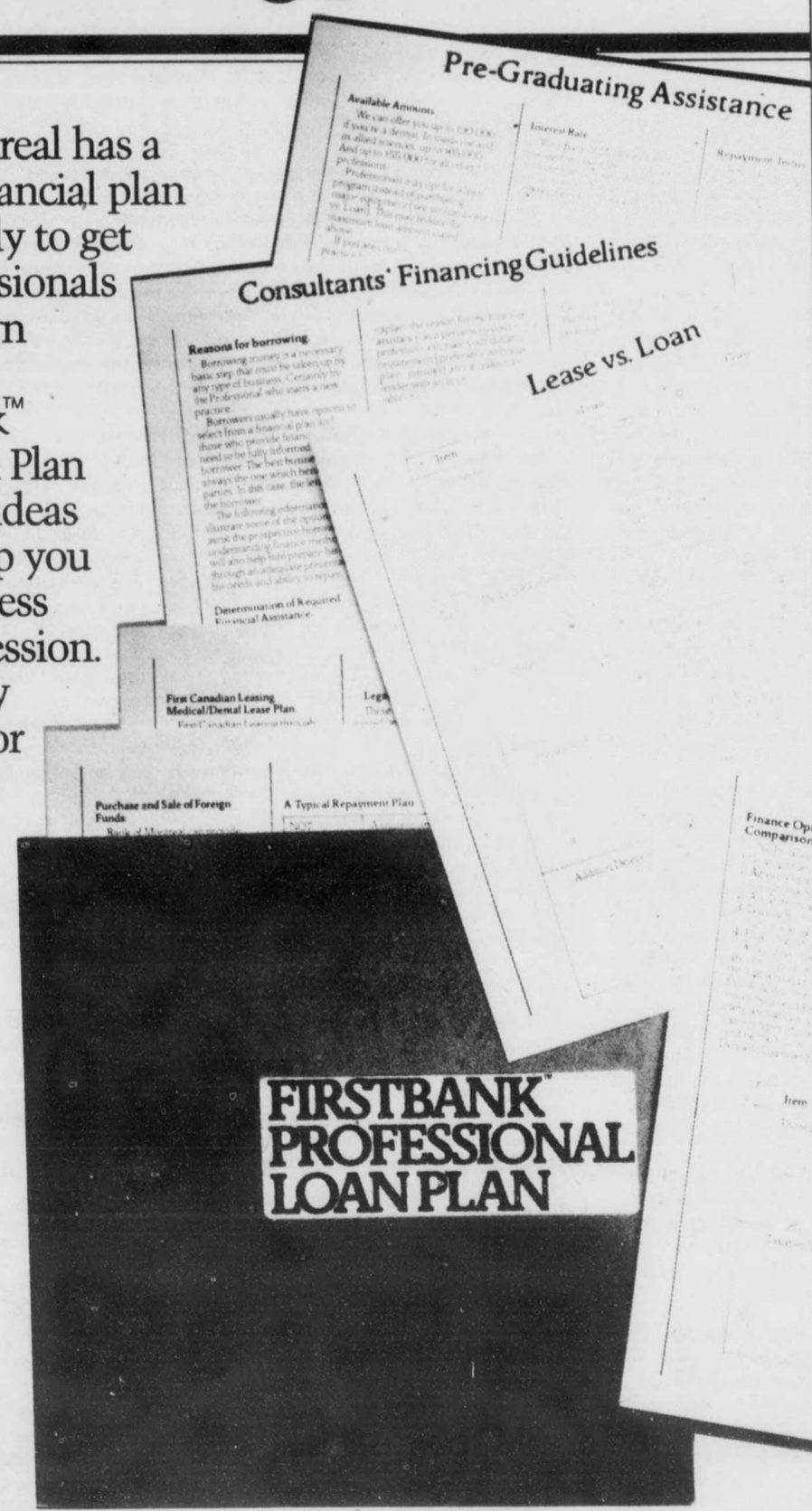
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The politician knows his real job is to get elected.