

All mysteries solved

by Keith Krause

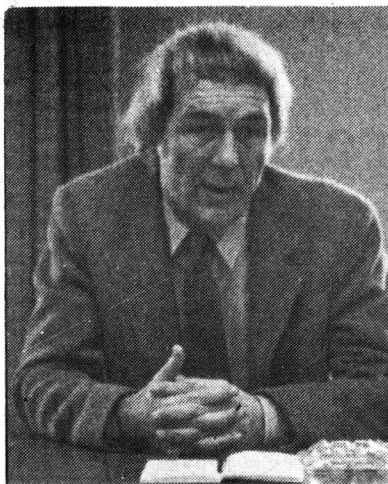
The mysteries of Liberal party policy were dissected at a forum Tuesday sponsored by the Political Science department.

And the man who professed to know all the answers was a Toronto journalist.

Richard Gwyn, columnist and author of *The Northern Magus* (the latest biography of Pierre Trudeau), said he saw "a decisive shift in Ottawa's policy stance since May 1979."

He attributed this shift to four factors, the first being the shock of defeat at the hands of Joe Clark's Tories.

"It was quite credible then to argue the NDP was about to overtake the Liberals," he said. "A lot of Liberals were worried about this."



Richard Gwyn

As evidence, Gwyn cited the fact that all other Western democracies are split along left-right political lines. The Liberals, he said, reacted as they always do when threatened: they moved left, invading traditional NDP territory.

"Nationalization (of energy companies) is seen, crudely, as a left policy," he said.

Gwyn also argued that Trudeau's personal desire to be judged well by history is affecting his actions.

"He was pretty angered by what he read in the first draft of history" presented by journalists after his resignation, he said. "His priorities are now his own."

Trudeau has also, according to Gwyn, privately said "I saved Quebec, somebody else will have to save the West."

Instead, Trudeau has decided to concentrate on two areas, the constitution and North-South relations.

A genuine feeling that Canada is becoming too decentralized was the third factor cited by Gwyn. He argued many provinces are perceived as "building their own regional economies."

The federal government's lack of funding and its permanent deficit status also, he pointed out, reduces the effectiveness of any fiscal measures taken to direct and control the economy.

Gwyn's final observation was that the lack of Westerners in the Liberal caucus has increased the tendency for the government to ignore the West.

But when Gwyn turned his analytic tools to energy policy, he saw little but gloom and doom. A settlement of the Ottawa-Alberta pricing feud is not likely before

March 1, he said, when the first oil production cutback takes effect.

July 20 was, however, seen by Gwyn as the "deadline" for any agreement. If agreement has not been reached by then, Imperial Oil has promised to cancel its Cold Lake heavy oil project, which would have stunning repercussions on the regional and national economies.

"If Ottawa doesn't move significantly on price, there will be no agreement," said Gwyn. "I don't believe, though, that Ottawa will ever use its declaratory powers over the tar sands."

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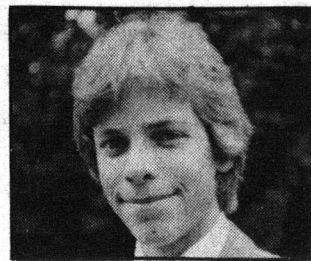
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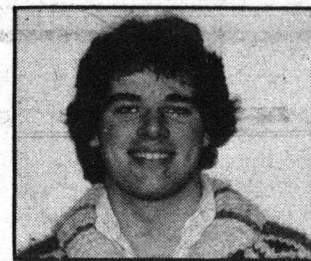
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