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Hatfield government crushed by McKenna

By MELYNDA JARRATT

Richard Bennett Hatfield, New Brunswick's scandal-ridden premier and Canada's senior politician, resigned as leader of the provincial Progressive Conservative's Wednesday after a humiliating defeat at the polls Oct. 13.

Hatfield, who personally lost the seat of Carleton-Centre he had held since 1961, accepted blame for his party's massive defeat by the Liberals under Frank McKenna. The Liberal's, who took all 58 seats in the provincial legislature, literally mopped up all opposition and sent the Conservative Party of New Brunswick plummeting into obscurity.

Speaking to reporters outside of his brother's home in Hartland Tuesday night, Hatfield recalled of his long career

in provincial politics, saying how he had "loved serving the people of New Brunswick. . . that is what really fills my heart tonight."

As a small crowd of young supporters yelled out "three cheers for Hatfield" passing cars filled with local Liberals honked their horns in victory.

However, it should have come as no surprise to the Conservative party that they would lose the October 13 election. It had been evident for months that under Hatfield's leadership they would be defeated. Public opinion polls were predicting a landslide Liberal victory for the McKenna team because New Brunswickers were simply fed up with Richard Hatfield. A change in leadership is what the province wanted, "and

they got change" said Hatfield.

Secret Whisper Campaign

In the last weeks of the campaign, Hatfield accused the Liberals of a *secret whisper campaign* designed to muddy his reputation. But it was no secret, and the Liberals had no need to hint at scandal when all of New Brunswick, and the rest of the country had been witness to a variety of scandalous events which seemed to follow the Premier around like a dark cloud during his reign.

Sadly, it was this reputation and the marijuana-in-the-suitcase incident, for which he will be most remembered. It was in September, 1984, that Hatfield really began to lose ground when RCMP officers discovered 35 grams of marijuana in his suitcase. The search, which was part of a regular search of luggage going on board a plane on which the Queen and Prince Philip were flying, ended up with Hatfield on every newspaper from Vancouver to Fleet Street. And it was an incident from which Hatfield was never able to recover lost ground.

Not long after his acquittal on the possession charge, two former University students came forward with tales of a night spent at Hatfield's home where they snorted cocaine and then went on an all-expense paid trip to Montreal by government airplane. It was never the same for



Hatfield in a more jovial mood wearing a UNB winter carnival scarf earlier this year.

Richard Hatfield after that.

Yet he refused to call it quits—even after a call for a new leader by the "dump-Hatfield element" in his caucus as well as a notable decrease in his popularity province-wide. During his campaign a familiar scene was people refusing to shake his hand or speaking loudly in his disfavor. But he nevertheless persevered and his supporters say he should be admired for his "guts".

However, Hatfield will also be remembered for his role as a main player in federal politics, a man who conducted himself with verve and confidence. In the past, he was a Conservative who supported

Liberal Trudeau's stand on bilingualism, and even at Meech Lake more recently, he sat at the collaborating table as a senior member. He was among other things, one of the Architects of the 1982 Constitution Act and he entrenched New Brunswick as the only bilingual province in Canada.

With the Liberals firmly entrenched in power for the next five years the Progressive Conservative Party of New Brunswick has some major restructuring to do. Without an official Opposition in the legislature it is certain that various groups will be vying

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