

"Thinkers' Conference..."

EDITOR'S NOTE

Following is the first of four articles on "The Fredericton Conference on Canadian Goals." The author, an active member of The Young Conservative Party, remains by his own request, anonymous.

PARTY REJUVENATION

"I am not a member of an organized political party; I'm a Conservative." With such an air of uncertainty and disillusionment present, the Progressive Conservative National Conference on Canadian Goals, met in Fredericton from Sept. 8 - 12. The delegates were to number 200 and include many prominent intellectuals. The Tories billed this meeting as a "Thinkers' Conference", and their desperate hope was that it would rejuvenate their party.

Such a conference is not unique in Canadian annals. The Conservatives in 1942 and the Liberals in 1960 held similar meetings, but the air of urgency surrounding this most recent conference was probably unprecedented. Since his 1963 defeat, Mr. Diefenbaker has floundered, grasping for an issue which will vault him back into public favour. Seemingly devoid of substantive issues, the Progressive Conservative hierarchy has substituted regionism for principle, and opportunism for policy. Many elements within the party had clearly voiced their dissatisfaction with Mr. Diefenbaker's continued leadership, and the last annual meeting of the party was highlighted by an abrasive attempt to overthrow him. With one part of the party openly rebellious, and with the other regarding their Chieftain as semi-Divine, the Progressive Conservative party was confused, vacillating, and pessimistic of the future.

Guidelines of Modern Conservatism

The Fredericton Conference had been conceived to paper over the gaping uncertainties of the party's philosophy and to establish the guidelines of modern Conservatism. This conference emerged as the brainchild of Dalton Camp, Party president (and advertising executive) who is painfully aware that the Progressive Conservative "image" needs refurbishing. Mr. Camp aspires to transform his party into an intellectually responsible movement, reflecting the basic principles of conservative thought. The Fredericton Conference was intended to represent the launching board of this ambitious program.

The delegates discussed papers presented on the leading dilemmas of Canadian politics: Man's relationship to society, Canadian - American relations, external relations, government intervention in the economy and in biculturalism. The organizers of the conference assembled an impressive list of educators, economists, and political scientists who all delivered papers.

MAN AND THE STATE

Dr. Robert Clark, a U.B.C. professor, prepared a thought provoking treatise on the relationship between man and the state. Dr. Clark rejects both extremes - untempered individualism and outright collectivism - as unrealistic. He contends that everyone must seek the common good which is composed of both individual - and state-oriented goals. Man does not exist for the sake of the state, but neither can he live in a vacuum.

Dr. Clark suggest that each individual has a dual responsibility to himself, and to the state. He believes that several factors operating in modern so-

ciety, influence us to neglect these responsibilities. The large organization, . . . the huge corporation, the powerful trade union, the large university, hospital or church. . . tend to belittle the individual. We feel dwarfed by the mammoth institutions which surround us, and incapable of influencing events which concern us. The impersonal contacts which dominate our lives reduce us to a level of insignificance. A sense of personal responsibility is dependent upon the feeling that man is master of his own environment. The complete impersonal nature of the western society robs us of this feeling.

Politicians must also share the blame for the refusal on the part of many to meet their responsibilities. Rather than attempt to solve the nation's ills, they seek partisan advantage. Dr. Clark continues his condemnation of our politicians by quoting George Orwell, "Political language is designed to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." He contends that the rival parties attempt to outpromise each other with benefits that they will miraculously create. Certainly, a sense of personal responsibility is not fostered when our political leaders promise "something for nothing".

Dr. Clark believes that a free society of independent men is based upon the pillar of individual responsibility. If this crumbles, our liberties will gradually be ceded to a nationalistic state. It is the duty of all Canadians, in their public and private lives, to guard against this eventually.

H. Ian MacDonald, a University of Toronto professor, wrote a most interesting paper on "The Canadian Hedgehog and the American Fox". Prof. MacDonald explains that the United States occupies the dominant position among Canada's external concerns; we regard American wants as our own. The relative news coverage given to the recent Republican Convention and the Prime Minister's Conference is a case in point. Reports on the latter subject were delegated to the back page, as the headlines were filled with the account of Senator Goldwater's march to the Republican Nomination. Curiously, the racial struggle in Southern Rhodesia seems comparatively remote in contrast to the bitter civil rights battle ground in the American Racial anguish just as our heads swim at the thought of Barry Goldwater in the White House. We also demonstrate a good deal of that most common and unjustified attitude towards our large neighbour: moral superiority - in the sense that "it can not happen here".

Professor MacDonald castigates Canadian politicians at-

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE?

tempting to attain a false sense of independence or to regain an apparently forsaken sovereignty, resulting very often in the threat to a proper basis of a mature Canadian identity. Rather than face the fact that no longer can any nation enjoy an absolute sense of independence, Canadian politicians often masquerade our relationship with the U. S. in shibboleths about sovereignty and independence. We must expand our commitments to the continental defence rather than stick our heads in the sand.

The cause of Canadian Conservation is the subject of papers presented by Prof. Roger Graham and Prof. W.L. Morton. Prof. Graham traces the Conservative party's attitudes toward greater Canadian autonomy from Confederation to the present day. He explains that the Tories have been reluctant to surrender vestiges of the British connection. Prof. Graham states "The Conservative party and Conservative leaders, save for Borden, have generally shown less interest than the Liberals in constitutional autonomy and have sometimes opposed particular small advances in that direction, only to accept them once made, and have on the whole been more disposed to emphasize the value and importance of Canada's historic ties with Great Britain." Never has this attitude been more evident than in the Conservative's passionate defence of the Red Ensign.

What effect will the Fredericton Conference have upon Canadian politics? In the short run, its influence will be imperceptible. Mr. Diefenbaker undoubtedly welcomes this effort to cover his party with a mantle of intellectual responsibility, but it is unlikely that he will allow the recommendations emanating from the Conference to intercede between himself and the "common people". The voice of reason must await a new leader.

IN CONCLUSION

The Tories should be commended for undertaking this effort to revitalize their political philosophy. While the Liberals will continue to rely on public opinion polls, subsequent to this conference the Conservatives will be able to offer the Canadian people a coherent set of principles. While no political party can afford to become too dogmatic, the electorate, in the future, will discover that at least one party is unashamed of being principled.

The Progressive Conservatives have a lofty motto: "The vision to create . . . the courage to retain. So far Mr. Diefenbaker has only seemed to be interested in fulfilling the first two words of that slogan. Hopefully, the Fredericton Conference will initiate a new era of thought provoking discussion among Conservatives leading us into the second century of Confederation as they did the first.

Neptune Drowning ?

By GEORGE MUNROE
D.G.D.S. VICE-PRESIDENT

The Neptune Theatre this season enters its second year of operation. The extent of its success, or failure, will depend heavily on its reception by Dalhousie staff, and students.

During the 1963-64 season, Dalhousie proved to be a dismal failure in its support of this theatre, and it is time for a re-assessment of our own role in the Neptune's future.

It is possible, that with proper support, Halifax could become a centre of Canadian drama. Dalhousie then, as the area's foremost academic institution, has a responsibility to the Neptune: in the past we have been the centre only of theatre apathy. Changes, however, are taking place, and drama is playing an increasingly important role in campus life.

This year the University drama programme has been expanded.

Students are showing a greater interest in both the formal programme offered by the University, and that offered by the student Dramatics Society. (DGDS.)

Between now, and the end of November, The Neptune will be presenting some truly fine productions. Foremost here is Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, one of the best examples of theatrical art to appear in Halifax.

The Neptune Foundation has not yet completed plans for a Winter Season. Unless support and attendance are increased, the theatre may be unable to continue with winter productions. If this latter reduction occurs, Halifax will lose many of its most talented artists, thus questioning any continuance of legitimate local theatre.

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