

A DAY IN SEPTEMBER

By KEN BURKE

(Note: While interviewing Ignatius Kennedy, the independent candidate for the federal riding of Halifax, the writer was struck by the feeling that he was a character in a play. The play featured himself, the candidate, Floyd Cromwell, a worker for the Kennedy campaign, and Elaine Kennedy, the candidate's wife. In the interests of fairness, then, the transcribed interview will be presented in play form.)

Setting: A small white stuccoed apartment belonging to Elaine and Ignatius Kennedy.

Kennedy is an older man, his wife has not yet reached middle age, and both Floyd Cromwell and the Writer are in their early twenties.

The Writer: On your mailbox it read 'Prof. Ignatius Kennedy.' What are you a professor of?

Ignatius Kennedy: These days it seems you have to have a professor in front of your name. (pause) I am a professor of UFO-logy, recognized throughout Canada and the United States. I've spoken to one of the largest universities in Canada—Carleton University in Ottawa. (pause) I spoke there once.

Writer: How do you spell UFO-logy?...

Writer: You say that you're running in this campaign for "peace." What does this mean with regard to specific peace issues?

Floyd Cromwell: (Urgently to Ignatius) Well, do you wanna go through the whole campaign with him?

Ignatius: All right.

Floyd: Well, we'll just give you what we gave the others (walks to mound of papers, begins rummaging)

Ignatius: Do you want the newsletter? (brightening)

Floyd, Ignatius and Elaine Cromwell: (rapidly) Do you want the release? The newsletter, give him the newsletter, give him that.

(Floyd hands release to Writer)

Ignatius: It's the same one we handed out eight thousand of in the riding. (pauses to extravagantly spit tobacco into a plastic cup on a table) To make matters short, son, this is it. If you don't want to use any part of it, go on to the next question....

Writer: Have you ever run for election before?

Ignatius: (grinning) Isn't that funny, I thought you'd never ask. I ran in 1963, in the County election in Halifax, as an Independent—not backed by any slush funds, as I call them, or bagmen. In 1965, I ran in this riding in the federal election of that year. It was like this peace campaign, except on corruption of the white collar boys in Halifax and Ottawa at the time. (pause) The next time I ran was three or four years ago in a provincial election. I did not run here, I ran in Cape-East. Jeremy Akerman (former Nova Scotia New Democrat leader) resigned and his seat was open. I ran on a platform of equality for mankind. I didn't think that was given enough recognition at the time....

Writer: Are you running for peace because you feel it isn't getting enough attention in this election campaign?

Elaine: Oh, that's a very good question!

Ignatius: You must remember, this election wasn't called when I started. I started last October (pause) writing (pause) a poem (pause) for peace. At the time, I would say (looks upwards) I was inspired. I wrote it for the Pope, John Paul the Second.

Elaine: He wrote it for the Pope, specifically because of his peace efforts. He made peace with the man who shot him, which I thought was a good noble gesture.

Ignatius: So I wrote this poem in his honour. Now bring the poem out here to give the boy (Floyd goes to closet for poem). You'll have this poem for yourself.

Writer: Oh. (pause) Thank you.

Ignatius: They're selling it at all Zellers stores incidentally, for \$2.69 apiece. (Floyd hands the writer a poem entitled "Peace" and a song named "A Day in September" on hard cardboard backing) There's what I wrote, now read it.

(Long pause, as the writer reads)

Writer: This really must have taken a lot out of you.

Floyd: That's a very interesting comment!

Ignatius: Now, are you ready?

Writer: For what?

Ignatius: Oh, I also happen to have it on 45 rpm record.

Elaine: It just happens to be ready to play (presses the play button in the recorder on her lap).

Ignatius: (as music starts) Besides a poem, I wrote a song! (The song plays. Synthesizer and high, hymn-sing-ish female vocal for four minutes and twenty-two seconds.)

Ignatius: (as music ends) You get the message? You get the message?

Writer: Yes, certainly. You couldn't listen to it and not get the message.

Floyd: Hold on now (motions with hands. A bell is heard donging on the recorder. The other song is about to start) After the three bells....

(Two minutes and fifty-eight seconds of "Peace" later...)

Ignatius: That record and these here (poems), you'll have these as a gift. There's no charge, no bribe or anything. It took a lot of months to put this together. And anytime this record is played on the air in Canada, I gave permission that the royalties (3¢ per play) go to the Sick Children's Hospital burn unit....

Ignatius: What time will this come out?

Writer: The Thursday before the election.

Ignatius: Well, you may notify your students that on Sunday, September second... (looks at Floyd) You're organizing this. You know all about this (Floyd nods).

Floyd: We're organizing a PEACE RALLY at Victoria Park in front of the Robbie Burns statue. And I would like you to make clear that it's a peace rally, not a peace protest. By no means is it a peace PROTEST.

Ignatius: It is non-political. And the record and song will be played there.

Floyd: We could get thousands, we could get—who knows how many people could show up.

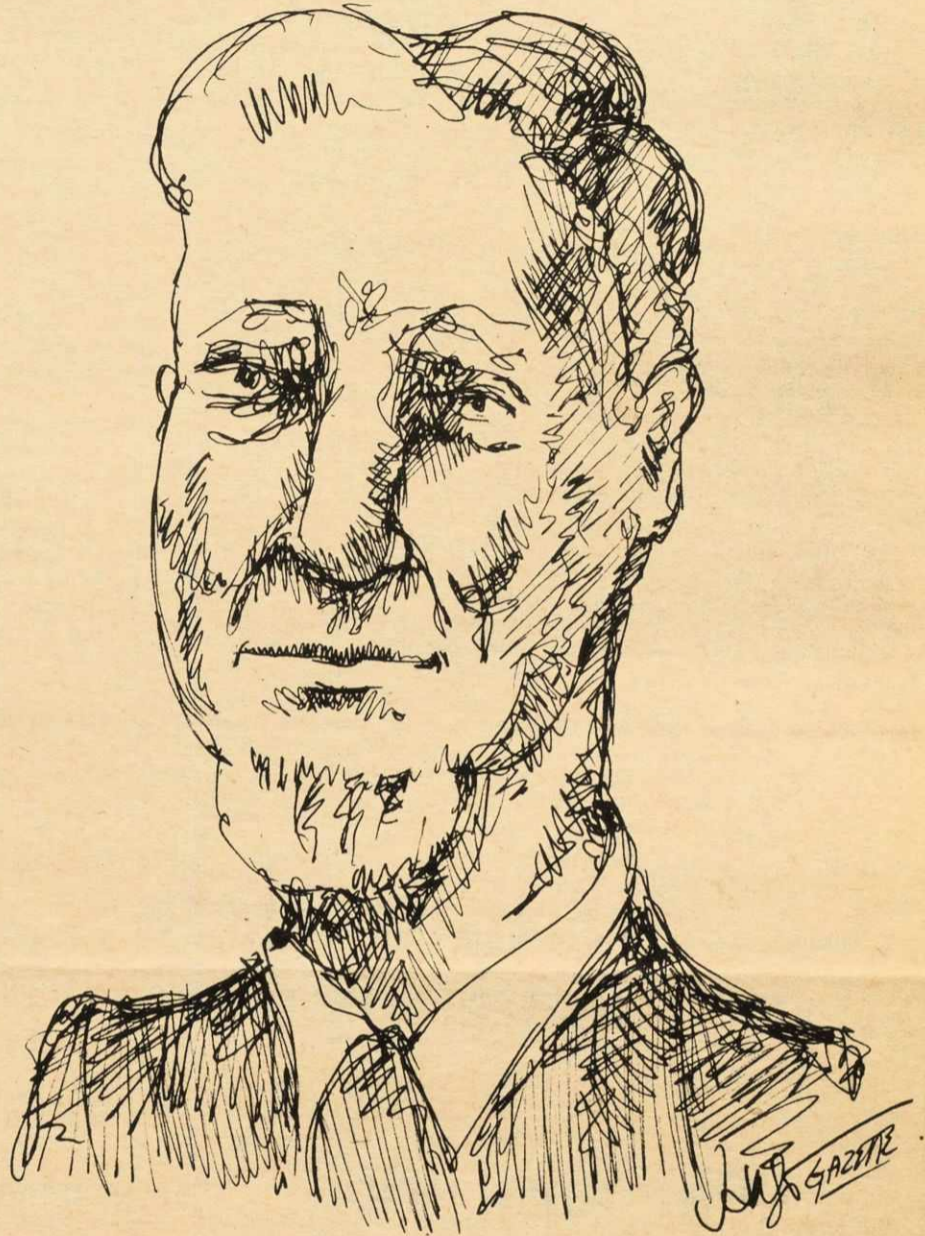
Ignatius: People who are interested in peace, not politics. Although I'm running in this federal election, I'm also the author of this great song and poem that are going worldwide....

Writer: What would you do if you won?

(laughter from Elaine)

Ignatius: (As if in reverie) What would I do if I won... First of all, I would give \$25,000 a year out of my salary to set up a peace movement in Canada. The armed forces (pause), I would double their size. (Pause) Not for war, I would turn it into a merchant marine navy. The uniforms would be....

Floyd: (whispering) Emblems....



Ignatius: All emblems of peace, representing a peaceful nation going around the world. It would solve one-quarter of the unemployment problem. (Long pause) If elected, I would have installed (pause) a large computer (pause) in Ottawa, and would have coming from each province, and each university student which qualifies, instead of being on welfare, these students would be working smaller computers employed today, and sending their information back to that main computer in Ottawa.

Floyd: (leaning forward intently) Do you understand what he's saying? The reason why he said what he's saying?

Writer: I'm not ... quite clear on that, no...

Floyd: The idea is for these young people to put their ideas in the computer, and see if it's good enough for them to get backing... (to Ignatius) Should I read this, to him?

Ignatius: (shaking his head) That's too deep for him. I don't think he's... Find that other part about the students—the ninety per cent part.

Floyd: Oh, yeah, yeah, lemme find that. Just give me a second to find that.

Writer: We'd certainly be interested in what you'd do for students.

Floyd: You realize this can't be released until tomorrow. This policy is going right across Canada tomorrow on the Canadian Press.

Ignatius: We sent it to the Chronicle-Herald.

Floyd: So at least they put it in.

(long pause, as Floyd looks through sheets and sheets of papers)

Ignatius: Ninety per cent.

Floyd: I know, I know.

(Floyd finds it, motions for attention)

Floyd: For students maintaining ninety per cent grades, he gets his education free!

Writer: Mm-hm.

Floyd: If he doesn't get ninety per cent grades, he doesn't get his education free.

Ignatius: It's incentive for the student to work a little better, to study a little more.

Writer: Uhh, I think most of the scholarships that are awarded in universities are given to people that earn grades of ninety per cent (pause) Or in some cases even less.

(Pause)

Floyd: Already get scholarships. Is that true?

Writer: At virtually every university.

(Pause)

Ignatius: Reduce it down to seventy-five per cent. Put down seventy-five, it gives them more.

Floyd: They're not getting enough, that's the point...

Writer: What kind of reaction are you getting?

Ignatius: Well, I knock on the door, and they say, "Come in, Mr. Kennedy." And after they listen to me, (pause) they say, "Well, it's different"....