

editorial

A voice of reason

For those who haven't noticed, we are living in history making times. Prime Minister Trudeau and his Liberal Government have presented a definite plan of action to patriate and amend the Canadian Constitution. In so doing they plan to entrench a bill of rights in the constitution.

Reaction to the proposals have been varied and diverse. Most of the provincial leaders are diametrically opposed to the plan. In Quebec the premier and the opposition leader have closed ranks to denounce the proposals. Premiers Bennet of British Columbia, Lougheed of Alberta and Peckford of Newfoundland have voiced their adamant opposition.

Premier Davis of Ontario has strongly supported the plan. Davis has gone so far as to suggest that Conservative MP's from Ontario follow his lead rather than Joe Clark's. Without the support of Davis' big blue machine many of these MP's would not make it to the House in future elections.

If there is a voice of reason to be heard in this debate it probably belongs to Ed Broadbent and the NDP. Pointing out

that there has been a long history of failed attempts to reach a consensus on constitutional change, Broadbent has declared "it is time to act and act now on the constitution."

The NDP leader pointed out that Trudeau had acted on a number of items and backed away from several others. This is a far cry from the inflexibility that Joe Clark has been complaining about. Broadbent favors the proposals for patriation, entrenchment of equalization payments and entrenchment of a charter of rights including language rights. Mr. Broadbent has not given blank cheque approval to the liberal propositions, however. NDP support for the resolution is contingent on the inclusion of sections giving the provinces the right to indirect taxation in the resource field and some powers over interprovincial trade.

Hopefully, other leaders and politicians in the country will be able to follow Ed Broadbent's example and put aside strictly personal and partisan concerns in favor of constructive criticism and reasonable consideration of the constitutional proposals.



Appeal process bizarre

"A bizarre turn of events." This is how one source has described the controversy surrounding the Kevin Ratcliff appeal case now before the UNB Board of Governors.

Last week The Brunswickan learned through the usual grapevine that a special three man tribunal had been set up to hear the Ratcliff appeal. This tribunal was to meet today to hear the appeal and report its recommendations to the Board of Governors next Wednesday. A call by this paper to a university official confirmed that this rumour was true.

Last Friday, Ratcliff was informed that the appeal process

had been changed. Instead, Ratcliff was asked to send a written letter to the board of governors requesting an appeal. The tribunal idea had been squashed, so to speak. The entire board of governors would hear the request for an appeal and not a three man tribunal. The Brunswickan again became aware of the change in the appeal process through the grapevine. A call to a university official Monday, again confirmed that the rumour was true.

The reason for the sudden change you ask? Legal reasons a university official has confirmed.

The exact and precise legal reason is left to speculation and rumour. The most cynical among us would suggest that political trickery is involved. The most optimistic among us would suggest that a solid legal reason has been advanced so that the appeal process had been changed. No one really knows for sure.

The immediate impression created by this entire turn of events is that of indecision. First, the appeal process is set up one way and then another way, supposedly because one or several people can't seem to make up their collective minds what to do.

What about Kevin Ratcliff? Has he been given the classic run

around by an administration that can't seem to decide one way or the other? This is certainly the impression one could gather.

Another disturbing factor in this whole situation is that Ratcliff must submit a written appeal to the board of governors. Surely the board does not intend to make a decision in this case without at least hearing an oral appeal from Ratcliff. Surely as well, a written appeal is not sufficient to make a complete and fair decision in this case. The board of governors should hear his appeal and at least if nothing else, create the impression that due and fair process has taken place.

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