

Ken MacDougall's view

In pursuit of the Big Apple

by Ken MacDougall

The Student Union elections are over; the posters are down, the candidates are licking their wounds and the annual jockeying for patronage, known as Student Union Secretariates, begins. In the next two months Gordon Neal, likeable fraternity brother and President-Elect, and Anne Gillis, hard-nosed Med student, the idol of millions in Shirreff Hall and Vice-President-Elect, should find themselves well-imbibed as every leech comes out of the swamp to display his or her "interest" in dedicating themselves to the Union. It's an annual affair, one that is fraught with laughs. If you're a cynic, you can really enjoy the spectacle.

Gord and Anne will succeed the administration of Bruce Russell and Ann Smiley. Gord Neal is a part of that administration, so few things should change, if he follows in Russell's and Smiley's footsteps.

And that, dear Reader, is the problem in itself. For Neal is not cast in the image of Russell, anymore than Russell was cast in the image of Dan O'Connor, the man he succeeded to the Executive Suite at 6136 University Avenue. There are, however, numerous similarities to their ascension, and these similarities are in themselves disturbing.

The Search For A Successor

Just over two years ago, Dan O'Connor ran on a massive platform, which promised everything from action on co-op housing to a Carleton Campus mini-SUB. After some tough and dirty campaigning, O'Connor won the right to be President of the Union, and actually set about to make some of his campaign promises a reality.

The problem began when it came time for O'Connor to step down from office. Looking for a successor in the dearth of talent in his Council, O'Connor probably could see no one of any particular credibility to replace him. Bruce Russell, then a fledgling Arts rep, seemed to want the job, but he lacked one essential ingredient for success - colour. So, a ticket was manufactured. With Commerce rep Mark Crossman managing Russell's drive for the Big Apple, a search of the campus was conducted to find a credible running mate, one who would give him drawing power in the professional faculties.

Enter Ann Smiley. Russell had never met Smiley when he called her and asked her to be his running mate. Smiley seemed a natural, if not contrived, choice. A First Year Law student, a Dunn scholar and a woman in International Women's Year, this was just too much of a combination to resist. So, with O'Connor's and the GAZETTE's blessing, Bruce and Ann went out to slay the dragons who dared to oppose them - arthritic as they were. The non-existent competition fell before their onslaught and, with over 55% total of the first ballot, Bruce and Ann became King and Queen of the Long Parliament.

A Year of Indecision...

Mark Crossman, in the meantime, basked in the role of king-maker. I asked him last year on CKDU just what graft was in this win for him, but Mark took great pains to profess his great admiration for Bruce, and assure our listening audience that he had only the best interests of the Union at heart.

A little over three weeks later, Mark Crossman became Treasurer of the Union.

That's how the year began. And things seemed only to get worse. Russell, for one thing, proved to be less than a stirring leader of the people. Hopelessly image-consci-

ous, and working with a campaign platform that was recycled, second-string O'Connorisms, Russell found it difficult to raise himself above the petty intrigues of his job. A massive Student Aid campaign during the summer was handled by five or six Council and GAZETTE people, while Russell received most of the favourable publicity. The petty and well-publicized quarrels between Russell and John Cheyne, the Graduate Students' President, over legitimate Graduate student grievances, were brought to a resolution not by any action taken by Russell, but by the skilled diplomacy of Barry Ward, a Third Year Law student and former Treasurer under O'Connor.

It was Smiley, however, who proved to be the greatest disappointment. The GAZETTE called her the strong point in the team; once in office, however, she could not even, as one depressed supporter commented, "raise herself above the issue of only talking to men in mixed company".

Smiley the intellectual became Smiley the recluse. Early in the year she became disinterested in the affairs of the Union, and things never improved from this low.

Crossman became the defacto power of the Executive. Early in the term he became disenchanted with Russell's performance, and seemed to do little to hide his displeasure.

Things Do Change, Sometimes...

With the elections rolling around for another year, Crossman again attempted to play the role of kingmaker. When it became obvious that one of the contesting teams of the Presidential ticket was going to make the performance of the Russell-Smiley-Crossman Council a major issue (on the assumption that Russell might run again), a popularity-based team was actively sought in an attempt to displace the momentum generated by the opposition. The opposition came from two Night Managers, Jim O'Neil and Nick Pittas; the team recruited to oppose them was Gord Neal and Anne Gillis.

Mark Crossman, of course, made it a point to emphasize the fact that he was only supporting Neal and Gillis to "make things interesting". But rumours circulated widely that he wanted O'Neil, in particular, to be "screwed" because of that team's attack on the budget, Crossman's personal package of band-aids.

Again, the campaign strategy was to contrive a team. This time Crossman chose a female Med student from residence and a popular fraternity brother. They took 60% of the vote on the second ballot.

They Won - So?...

This year, however, even Gord and Anne know that their ticket was contrived. And, once he takes office, Gord Neal is going to have to demonstrate almost immediately that he did not run simply because his ego got the better of his judgment (he lost last year to Russell and Smiley). He is also going to have to contend with the fact that he won in a year when, (if you toss out the results of Shirreff Hall) despite the final outcome, over 60% of the students voted on the basis of issues on the first ballot. And, right now, because he had no platform of any substance, Gord Neal has nowhere to turn for a platform except to the very people whom he defeated in this election. That may prove somewhat of a problem, especially if he moves to incorporate into the Council some of these losers (some examples: Dave Brown as Housing Secretary, John

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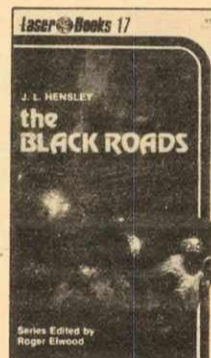
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