

ASSESS LAVAL



John Barr and Robin Hunter - - "No Man is a Camel?"

Even the simultaneous translator was gurgling with merriment at his extreme claims. Perhaps the best account of the debate was supplied by Le Carabin, the student paper at Laval University, which drew up the following score board:

| | Caouette | Lewis |
|-------------------------|----------|-------|
| Logic | 0 | 5 |
| Comedy | 3 | 1 |
| Common sense .. | 0 | 5 |
| Oratory | 5 | 5 |
| Semaphore signals | 10 | 0 |
| Intelligibility .. | 0 | 5 |
| Subject matter .. | 0 | 5 |
| Student reaction .. | 1 | 5 |
| Our opinion | 0 | 5 |

I was disappointed with the representation from the Liberal party, as I felt they could have contributed more in the way of speakers than they did. One MP turned up, to speak on the ECM, which he did with a positive approach.

The government's representative to the conference was Hon. George Hees, Minister of Trade and Commerce. I was unimpressed with Mr. Hees' policy. I felt his call for a balanced budget, his unimaginative clinging to outdated economic cliches unappealing. His main planks were an expanded trade program—which I agree with, and a "Buy Canadian" program which I also agree with, but for the life of me I can't see how the unemployed are going to buy anything at all—let alone Canadian. I asked Mr. Hees this, but didn't get an answer.

The Laval Conference taught me a lot about different parts of Canada, though it didn't teach me that much about economics. I enjoyed hearing how different factors were stressed by different areas. I noticed, for example, that the French-Canadians were generally more left wing than the English, and much more concerned about provincial autonomy to preserve cultural independence. The delegates from the Maritimes were quite concerned about the necessity for economic stimulation in their provinces, which are at present quite depressed.

I feel that the Laval Conference is a valuable contribution to inter-provincial understanding. It would be worthwhile for more universities to attempt to sponsor such conferences.

4. Finally, a plan would be drafted and submitted to the cabinet, which would change the plan in any ways they felt necessary and submit it to parliament.

The claims of opponents of democratic planning seemed to me to be mere speculation in most cases rather than fact based on evidence. Claims that by allowing democratic planning, a nation sells its birthright, its initiative and its freedom were brought forward. Yet when the instances of Western democracies which have tried planning were used as examples, (e.g. Sweden under the Social Democrats and the UK under the Labour Party) the arguments of the anti-planners fell flat. For I would go so far as to say that standards of civil liberties and political awareness in both these countries compare favorably with those in Canada and are definitely superior to those of the haven of private enterprise, the United States.

Basically the question boils

down to one of values: does a relatively small minority for the sake of profits have the right to make decisions which may throw thousands out of work, through no fault of their own? Or does society have the right, through the democratic process, to utilize the wealth of society to ensure an environment allowing a decent opportunity for the development of every individual personality in society instead of a privileged few? For me the answer seems obvious.

I cannot help feeling that the anti-planners tend to overstate their case somewhat. If we are to believe them, economic planning means a complete abolition of private ownership. Yet if we look at the two aforementioned planning nations we see even greater amounts of private enterprise after the introduction of planning, than before—because proper planning stimulates the whole economy.

Furthermore, from the stand point of economic efficiency, little Sweden has both higher per capita product, and a higher standard of living than private enterprise Canada. Presumably the right wing's hypothetical loss of initiative and efficiency was responsible for this.

Another highlight of the conference was the debate between M. Real Caouette, Deputy Leader of the Social Credit Party, and David Lewis, his counterpart in the New Democratic Party.

To a student from Alberta I don't think M. Caouette said anything he has not heard in every election in this province since 1935. But the WAY he said it! I found him amusing, but empty. He didn't speak on the topic—but I don't think we really expected him to.

Contrasted with David Lewis, a Rhodes Scholar and Queen's Council, M. Caouette seemed shallow.