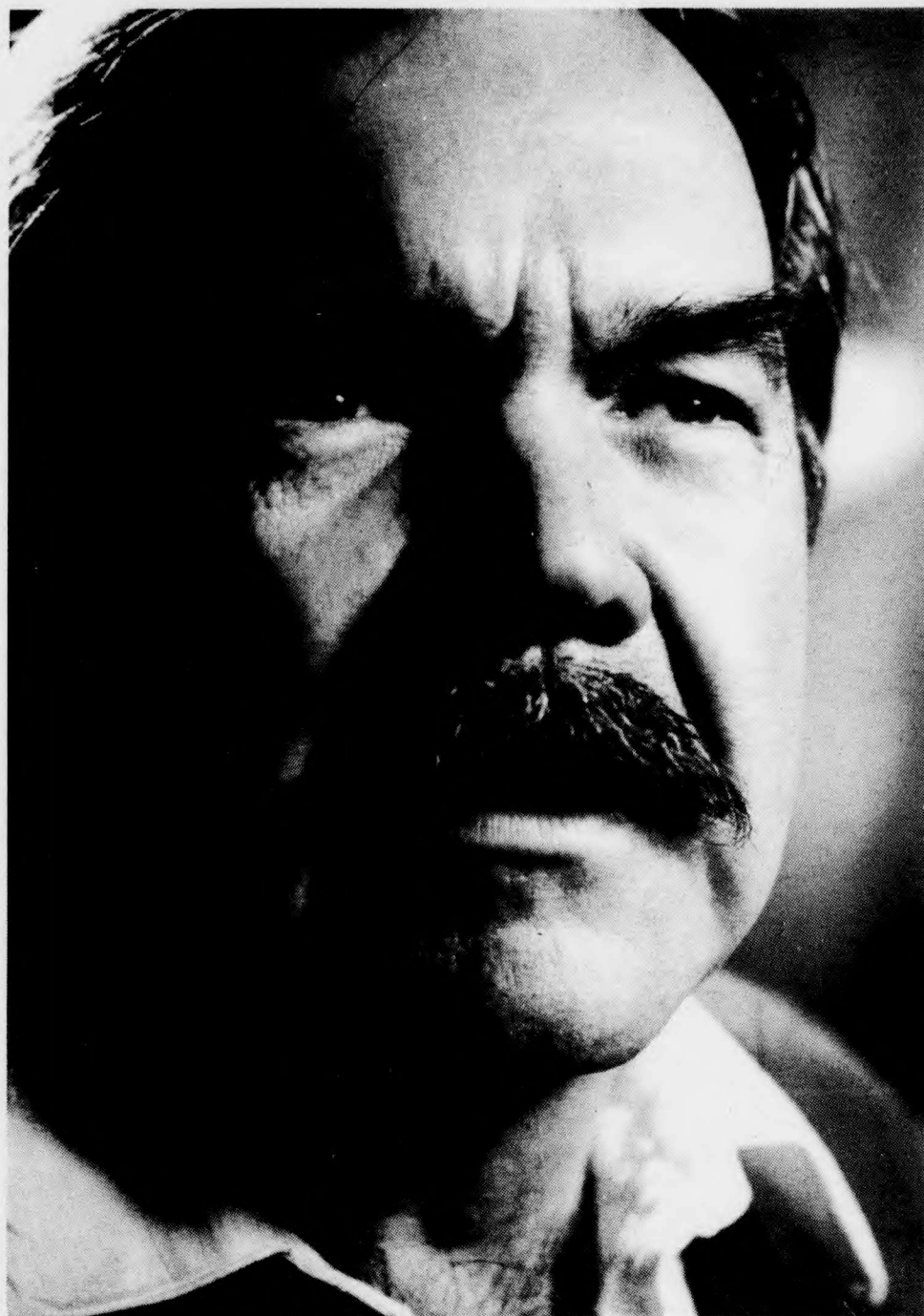


The term 'moonlighting' has been given new meaning by Atkinson Humanities professor John Harney. After teaching at York three days a week, he travels to Quebec and becomes Jean-Paul Harney, the leader of the provincial New Democratic Party (NDP). The 56 year old Irish-Quebecker became leader of the newly formed Party two years ago with virtually no grass roots support in the province. Today, the Party is a force to be reckoned with in the Quebec political landscape; perhaps the NDP, for the first time in history, will be a truly national party. Excalibur's Lorne Manly spoke to Harney Monday, just after the NDP convention.



PHOTOGRAPH BY GARY BLAKELEY

Nurturing a Political Party

EXCAL: After a lifetime involved in Ontario and federal politics, including MP for Scarborough West from 1972 to 1974, provincial secretary and running for the NDP national leadership twice, what made you decide to return to Quebec to build up the NDP in that province?

HARNEY: The answer to that is I didn't. I decided to return to Quebec to go and do some studying. I was interested in a project on the history of St. Lawrence, which I'm still working on, and I went down in the fall of 1983 to settle in Quebec during a sabbatical year. I buried myself in the archives for the better part of that year. It wasn't until the spring, just before my sabbatical was over when some people in Quebec discovered I was there.

I had decided the summer before not to be actively involved in politics anymore but some people asked me to give them a hand by becoming president of the then Quebec wing of the federal NDP to see if it could be picked up off the ground. It was virtually non-existent at the time. I said I would if they promised they wouldn't leave me any administrative or organizational chores but I would help them with whatever experience I could muster. I would also serve as a spokesperson for this small outfit. This they accepted I think on the grounds that I had some credibility within Quebec. Although I had been in Ontario I was quite well known in what is called *la classe politique*, people who follow politics, because I had never stayed very far away from the issues. I had often been on TV and radio and I had written articles in Quebec newspapers over the years on matters relating to Quebec and the Constitution. Also, while I was in Ontario, I was quite active in the Franco-Ontarian movement.

EXCAL: Why did you decide to end your career in politics and what made you change your mind? Did you see something in the Quebec political

scene that caused you to say I'm going to forget what I said and go back into politics?

HARNEY: I decided to end my career in active politics because I had a fairly long career and I was quite satisfied with the resolution we had worked on and gotten through the 1983 federal convention . . . it was tied to a resolution that the Party should pull its socks up and do something about organizing Quebec and revising its Quebec policy. I thought with such a strong resolution endorsed overwhelmingly at a convention, the Party would go ahead and do it. But they hadn't.

EXCAL: So despite the 1983 resolution the NDP hadn't really made an effort to get involved in Quebec. What do you think were the reasons for that?

HARNEY: That's perhaps beyond this interview but I think we have to remember the situation of the federal party in the winter of 1983-84; it was pretty parlous. It was at a stage where it was actually struggling for survival. It was reaching the depths of the polls—it had gone down to nine and a half percent at one stage, Mr. Broadbent (the federal NDP leader) was not feeling well after going through a couple of back operations. Every once in a while the universe collapses; it was collapsing on the NDP that particular year.

Also the apparatus of the Party—I'm not talking about the leadership, or the people in the House of Commons, or the officers, or the leader—I'm talking about the apparatus (the full-time people, the people who hold the Secretariat together); it was not interested at all. So even though decisions were being made at the executive level, they were not being carried out by the apparatus . . . There wasn't a single one (in the apparatus) that could speak a word of French and they felt threatened.

EXCAL: Who asked you to become involved in the

Quebec wing of the NDP?

HARNEY: A few local people in Quebec; nobody tied with the federal party as such, with Ottawa. As a matter of fact, once it was heard up in Ottawa that I might indeed be running for the presidency of the Quebec NDP, an organizer was sent to see if he could stop it (laughing). History will not record I was sent down by anybody.

EXCAL: What is the reason you are not the most well-liked person at federal NDP headquarters?

HARNEY: For years I was a pain in the neck. The federal party's policy on Quebec was insufficient . . . I wanted the Party to become a truly national party. In order to become a truly national party it had to get itself involved in Quebec; in order to get itself involved in Quebec it had to develop policy that was respectful of Quebec's ideals and ambitions.

EXCAL: When you became leader of the Quebec NDP in 1985 there was no NDP structure to speak of and hardly any grass roots support in the province. Now you have built up the Party to 3000 members and the NDP is riding high in the opinion polls with over 40 percent support in some. What has been the difference in the last couple of years?

HARNEY: I became the President of the Quebec wing of the federal NDP in the spring of 1984 and then we decided to deliberately go through a process of deciding whether we would become a provincial party. That we did in the fall of 1985 and at that stage I became leader of the provincial party. Already by that stage we'd picked up enough people to hold a convention to create a party, to staff an executive of about 24 people, many of whom were brilliant and very, very capable. We had also picked up enough support to be able to get some funds so

we could open a secretariat.

As this went on the less I was involved in the actual day to day organization. My role was one of leadership and spokesperson and I'd like to think a certain knowledge of how a political party is structured . . . I was also in the process of going through a number of decisions with my colleagues in Quebec with regard to what the Party would say in Quebec, what positions it would take, what statements it would make, and how it would structure itself. This was perhaps the most vital decision—a totally new matter for Quebec.

EXCAL: What was the structure the Quebec NDP decided to take?

HARNEY: We decided to have one party which would operate on both the provincial level and on the federal level. This is the way it works for the other NDP sections across the country. You cannot be a member of the federal NDP. The provincial NDP gathers together its members in associations and the federal organization, the federal campaign, is done by each provincial section.

Now, to do this in Quebec was certainly against Quebec tradition where Quebec provincial parties are very clear on keeping themselves distinct from federal parties. This is a crock of bananas of course because many of the Liberals in the Quebec Liberal Party are in the federal Liberal Party but they pretend to have nothing to do with one another. On the Conservative side, once in a while the Conservatives get terribly chummy with a Quebec nationalist right wing party like the Union Nationale and just a few years ago the Parti Quebec (PQ). This process has royally screwed Quebec over the generations and a lot of Quebeckers are beginning to wake up to the fact that this is not a choice.

We decided that we would behave *avec*