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Qualifications

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Rae wins

Predictably Ontario's NDPers go with favorite

PJ Todd and Berel Wetstein

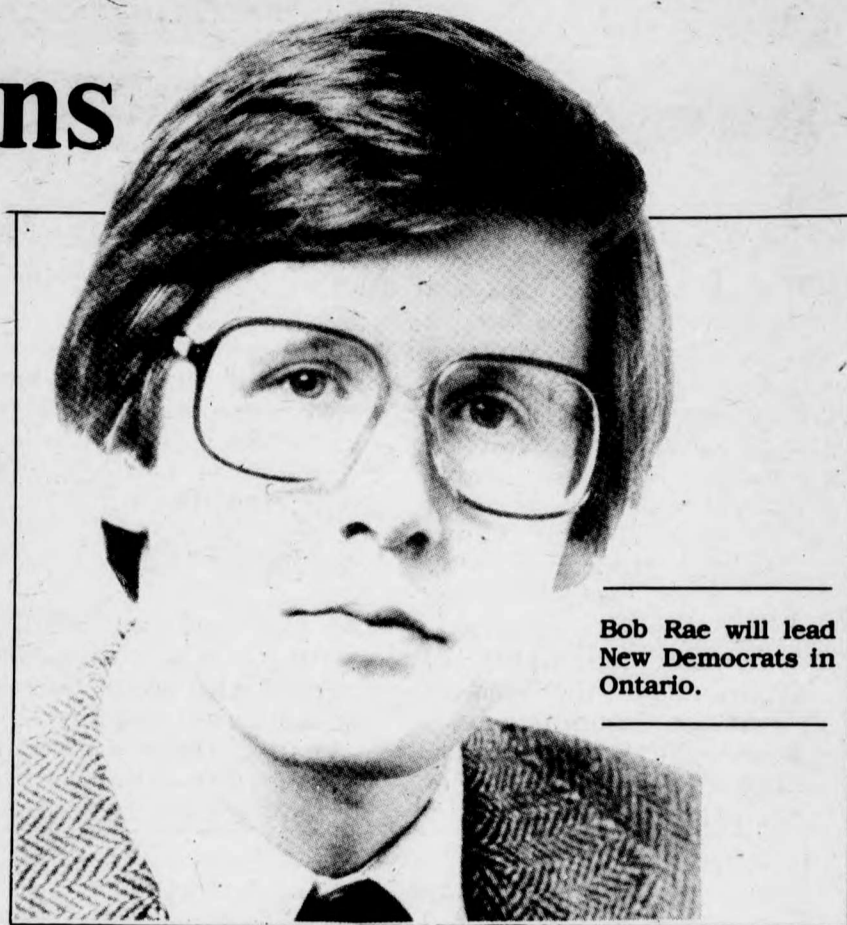
In a convention that often appeared aimed more at its television audience than at its delegates, Bob Rae breezed into the NDP leadership post. The media's 'glamour boy' grabbed a first-ballot victory with 1,300 of a possible 2,100 votes, Sunday afternoon, at Toronto's Harbour Castle Hilton Convention Centre.

Rae downplayed policy rhetoric throughout the three-day convention, relying instead upon the cool and confident image he had established as federal Finance critic.

Richard Johnston, the NDP's left-wing champion and Rae's anticipated challenger, failed in his speeches to convince delegates he was the man for the job.

Dark horse, Jim Foulds, remained in the shadows. He exhibited the oratorical style for which he has become infamous: a fire-brand socialist vocabulary couched in the dulcet tones of a retired clergyman.

Three delegates from York's 55-member strong NDP Student Association were present at the convention. In a microcosmic representation of convention voting patterns, two members of the group pledged their support to Rae and one diverged with a ballot for Johnston. Bob Dearbourne, York NDP Publicity



Bob Rae will lead New Democrats in Ontario.

on the convention floor. Their bid to eliminate Canadian government dealings with any corporations that invest, directly or through subsidiaries, in South Africa was accepted. But a second resolution which denounced U.S. intervention in El Salvador and called upon the Canadian government to recognize the Democratic Revolutionary Front and the Liberation Front Farabundo Marti as legitimate representatives of that country was not heard because of its low priority status. Also not heard was York's third resolution which requested a reduction in tuition fees and a re-assignment of the resulting tax burden to corporate shoulders.

The majority of Ontario university delegates were not supporting Bob Rae. Erna Van Duren, a 2nd-year psychology major at Waterloo University

selection, Steve Andrews, a 2nd-year Arts and Science student at Lakehead University complained that the convention "was a complete waste of time."

There is no way I could support Rae. He was elected undemocratically by union slating." For the purposes of leadership elections, union members are considered party members whether or not they hold a party membership card. This allowed the unions to provide over 40% of the convention delegates.

The only surprise of the election was the size of Rae's victory. While Rae was the anticipated winner, Johnston was expected to win more than the 512 votes he managed to obtain. Foulds received 232 votes.

Discussing Johnston's poor performance, many delegates

Rae's image the deciding factor

Manager and a convention delegate, commented on the split, "democracy is the raison d'être of the NDP and hence we are voting with personal direction."

Brenda Wainman, part-time Atkinson social work student and York U. NDP alternate, commented on the leadership race. "None of the candidates differ in policy," she said. "People voting for Rae give the pseudo-argument that there is a difference, but really, it's the added component of Rae's image that will be the deciding factor."

York University saw only one of its three resolutions reviewed

spoke for many Johnston supporters when she said, "we must be more honest about economic positions. I believe in nationalization and Richard was the only candidate who supported us on this issue. Economics must be stressed as it is the area that concerns most people." Asked if she could support Rae in the next election, Van Duren gave a party-loyal "yes".

Bitterness, however, was apparent among Fould supporters. Quarrelling with the NDP method of delegate

emphasized his tone of resignation in the final candidate address. In the words of one delegate, "it sounded like a concession of defeat." This attitude is thought to have swung some of the undecided votes to the confident Bob Rae.

Now that Rae has secured the NDP leadership, his challenge is to win a seat at Queen's Park. Rae acknowledged, under incessant questioning from the media, that a deal had not yet been struck with any current member of the Ontario legislature.

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