

NOVEMBER 3, 1972

BELAND HONDERICH'S ADVICE

On foreign ownership, the Conservatives say in a policy statement they would require that Canadians be allowed to participate in the ownership and management of foreign controlled firms.

But Stanfield has said little about this program or how it would be accomplished and, in fact, has made statements recently which suggest he would do little or nothing about foreign ownership. He apparently is not prepared to establish a screening board and without a review board his policy on foreign ownership is not credible.

The easy way for a newspaper, as for a citizen, would be not to support any party in this election. But this is not a responsible course for a citizen in a democratic society — or for a newspaper that believes it has a responsibility to provide comment and opinion on the issues of the day.

We have concluded, therefore, that on the basis of the two issues that concern us most — unemployment and Canadian independence — we must withdraw our support from the Liberals . . . Of the alternatives, both of which are unattractive, we prefer the Conservatives.

— Beland H. Honderich, *Toronto Star*

stable for long enough that they could be called "traditional." British Columbia, for instance, will return pluralities of Liberals, Conservatives or New Democrats, depending on its mood.

Ontario oscillates back and forth between the Liberals and the Tories. Newfoundland, once solidly Liberal, then became solidly Conservative, and now isn't solid at all.

The only pattern that seems to be stable is a continuing instability. Five of the last seven elections have produced minority governments, and three of them have been totally inconclusive. Only twice in the last 15 years has there been a countrywide trend of any kind, and only once has there been a genuine sweep. John Diefenbaker, in 1958, took a majority of the seats in every province except Newfoundland. He won two thirds of the seats

in previously Liberal Quebec. He shut the Liberals out in all except four provinces.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau's election in 1968 was a majority of a different order. The Liberals took fifty seats fewer than the Conservatives had ten years earlier. Large parts of the country resisted Trudeau's appeal.

Newfoundland, bucking the tide again, voted Conservative out of dissatisfaction with the provincial Liberal regime. In the Maritimes it was Robert Stanfield's coat-tails, not Trudeau's, that were the decisive factor. The prairies were still Diefenbaker country, and a large proportion of the people who drifted away from the Conservatives went NDP rather than Liberal. To the extent that there was a sweep, it was concentrated in the three large provinces of Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia.

And yet, in the context of 1968, the Trudeau victory was a landslide. The country had had minority governments for the previous six years, and the happy political certainty of the Louis St-Laurent era was evidently a thing of the past. With Quebec crawling with separatists, the west mad at the east, and campus-based radicalism at its height across the country, a majority of any sort was not to be sneezed at.

The man who achieved it had unquestionably struck a popular chord. He would put us on the map, keep the country together, give us some élan. It was 1968, the year after Expo and the centennial, and in the Canada that elected Pierre Elliott Trudeau, all things were possible.

There were two overriding promises in Trudeau's 1968 campaign, one of them explicit, and the other implicit. The implicit promise was to do something about Quebec; the explicit one was to do something about regional economic disparities. "If the underdevelopment of the Atlantic provinces," Trudeau said during the campaign, "is not corrected — not by charity or subsidies but by helping them become areas of economic growth — then the unity of the country is almost as surely destroyed as it would be by the French-English confrontation."

The Quebec policy was not the only one to have problems; the regional development policy ran into snags too. The first snag was the Liberals' sorry weakness in the Atlantic provinces, and the improbability of winning any more seats in that region so long as Robert Stanfield was leader of the Conservatives: it made the electoral motivation to show results in the area somewhat

CLAUDE RYAN'S ADVICE

In the last four years, the image that we had of the Conservative party has given way to a different one. Mr. Stanfield remains the worthy man we thought we had discovered in 1968. However, as one goes west, the team that surrounds him includes a high proportion of people who have a conception of Canadian unity even more rigid than that of Mr. Trudeau. Mr. Stanfield has shown that he is open on the question of bilingualism; nevertheless, the fiercest opposition to this measure, which is only the beginning of a real solution, has come from his group. On the more difficult question of relations between Quebec and the rest of Canada, Mr. Stanfield has unceasingly reproached Mr. Trudeau for his rigidity. Each time he has been pressed to say what he would do himself, he has generally repeated in different terms the position defined by Mr. Trudeau . . .

Where the quality of its candidates warrants it, electors wishing to cast an independent vote Monday should support the NDP.

— Claude Ryan, *Montreal Le Devoir*

less urgent than it might have been.

Quebec, on the other hand, was not only a centre of Liberal strength; it was an area of the country that tended to act up, and there were distinct political advantages to keeping it quiet. More than had been expected of the industrial incentive grants handed out by Trudeau's new department of regional economic expansion went to Quebec, with correspondingly less for the Atlantic provinces. More important, the grants program showed little sign of being of much value anywhere, if we ignore for the moment its value to plant-owners.

By 1971, the government's regional development policy was coming under heavy criticism, notably from the areas it was supposed to be developing. It was criticism of the way the government was proceeding, and not of

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The bored leading the bored

It is one of the more distasteful aspects of our parliamentary democracy that general elections afford the national press the occasion to display by far its shoddiest wares.

Usually, it does little harm to be intermittently reminded of the moribund state of political writing in this country, which can be laid at the doorstep of incompetence, the generally inferior character of the public education system, and the fact that newspapers are, after all, owned by the same class that operate used car lots, erect tenements, and appear at weekly Chamber of Commerce gatherings.

A country that has made Charles Lynch the highest-paid reporter, and Peter Newman the most respected political analyst, has much to answer for.

It is people like these, it must be remembered, that brought us Trudeaumania, the Gerda Munsinger affair and intermittent reports of Soviet infiltration, and skilfully guided a troubled nation through the dark nights of the War Measures Act with restraint, fortitude and keen perspicacity.

Rarely, however, has such spontaneous consensus emerged from the Ottawa Press Gallery's Tower of Babel as during the months of September and October immediately past. A deeply thought-out set of alternatives were outlined for a people who after all, needed to have the problems defined for them:

Check one.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau is:

- arrogant
- cloistered in an ivory tower
- unconcerned
- a man who never had to work for a living
- a crypto-socialist.

Robert Stanfield is uncharismatic but:

- honest
- diligent
- solid

— a man who deserves a chance.

The government is full of:

- technocrats
- bureaucrats
- autocrats
- hippies
- Frenchmen.

The country is:

- disillusioned
- weary
- searching
- angry.

Mr. Trudeau has many faults, but one of them is not his contempt for the press.

The press believes — and perhaps it has a point — that it made Pierre Elliott Trudeau. And the press has been scorned. Hence it has the right to unmake Pierre Elliott Trudeau. This is, if not acceptable, at least inevitable. The national press, however, went beyond.

"I know that one way to get a story onto the front page this time is to make my lead somebody saying there are no issues in this election," a Toronto reporter lamented last month.

And the word spread. From the first week of the election, the editorialists — all failed grammar school teachers — proclaimed this is a dull election, an election with no issues save what Mr. Lewis was raising, an election with no meat in it.

In 1968, Pierre Elliott Trudeau was bragging that he conducted an election campaign making "no promises." That is code for "no issues."

But 1972 had more issues than the last three federal elections combined. Housing policy, pipelines, regional disparity policy, the tax system, welfare, immigration policy, Quebec, dying farms, wheat prices, fisheries policy, industrial development policy, local initiatives policy, youth policy, northern development, language pol-

icy, civil service, unemployment, food prices, wage-price controls, strikes, pensions . . .

The press, however, was bored.

More than that, the press did two things: it consciously and systematically avoided serious coverage reflecting the debate over these issues, so as to give the public the impression that nothing of any substance was being debated; and it decided on its own what the real issues were.

Of course, traditional lip-service was paid to unemployment and inflation as the key issues. That being despatched, the Toronto papers decided that the awkward influx of Caribbeans, and the excessive spending on unemployment insurance cheques, were the issues that the government was ignoring. The *Toronto Star* boldly declared on its front page that the unemployment insurance situation was such a scandal that it was the main issue in the election.

Few Canadians are really aware of the domination of the Toronto press over what they will read in Saskatchewan papers or see on Newfoundland television stations. Because much of the Ottawa "commentator corps" is employed or syndicated by the Toronto media, and because Canadian Press carries lightly rewritten stories from the Toronto papers on its service a great deal of the time, the power of the Toronto clique is amplified through CP, and Broadcast News, the CP service which forms the basis of most private radio and TV newscasts.

Tied to the Toronto clique of the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe* and *Maclean's*, is the Ottawa clique of Southam, FP and CBC, which boast such hearties as Charles Lynch, and Ron "No-Problem" Collister.

It is the task of these men, knit even more tightly by being on the campaign trail together during election time, to tell us whom to be bored, and when to be angry.

Sensing their true calling, they achieved the former magnificently.