

NDP convention shifts left

By Mark Boudreau and Andrew Cardozo
 "I'm a grass-root NDP" said buttons on the delegates at the Ontario New Democratic Party Policy Leadership convention held at the Sheraton Centre Hotel earlier this month.

The selection of policies and leader clearly hammered home that this was in fact a very "grass-roots" convention.

The delegates were determined to have a say in defining the grounds on which the NDP would fight the next provincial election. When it was over there was a distinct socialist turn in the party.

The stress on economics and the tough mood of the delegates signaled this a turning away from the human and social issues that Stephan Lewis had pursued.

On the economic front the NDP took a hard-line position that will certainly widen the gulf between themselves and the two other provincial parties. And this was the whole point behind the policy convention. As one delegate stated; "It's time to stand up and say who we are". Many of the New Democrats believed that Lewis had bartered away socialist principles trying to win power.

A policy for an Industrial Strategy for Ontario was adopted which emphasized a "planned economy" in order to develop, protect, and sustain a strong manufacturing sector of the economy.

In this overall economic strategy a resolution was overwhelmingly passed calling for public ownership of the resource operations of INCO, Falconbridge, Rio Algom and Denison mines.

The delegates reaffirmed the party's controversial stand in support of a \$4 hourly minimum wage, establishing a formula by which it would increase in step with the provincial composite wage index.

The leadership race was won by Michael Cassidy despite the fact that he is least photogenic, furthest from the realm of charisma and pin-stripe suits. But then that seems to have been what the majority of delegates wanted in the final analysis.

Of the three candidates, Cassidy was certainly the most "policed" man, who talked the kind of economics that the "grass-roots" delegates wanted to hear.

More important, Cassidy, the most left-wing of the candidates, was a reflection of the new socialist turn in the NDP.



Mark Boudreau—photo

Victory of an underdog: New NDP leader Michael Cassidy may steer New Democrats to the left.

Throughout the convention he emphasized that the party would have to concentrate on jobs and the economy if the NDP were to win power in Ontario.

"We must achieve the same credibility on economic issues that the New Democratic Party under Stephan Lewis has developed on human and social issues over the last seven years."

However, Cassidy's problems as a new leader are considerable. To begin with he entered the race with the support of a mere three of 33 caucus members, while Ian Deans had 17 and Mike Breugh had 7.

In addition Cassidy had the least labour support. This is crucial at a time when the NDP and labour are not exactly bedfellows.

A "grassroots" victory it was and for this Cassidy deserves credit. But the fact of the matter is that in representative democracy he will have to tone down his arrogant and abrasive character if he is to jive with the big guns of the party. His intellect and ambition should enable him to solidify his support.

What remains to be seen is whether this new shift towards socialism, reflected in the new leader, can overcome the conservative mood of Ontario

Blue Faces; White Death

By D. Ian McLeod

When faced with the terror of a Canadian blizzard, one is reminded of those Reader's Digest articles (you know the type): *I Was Chased By a Bull and Met God, or High Tension at Rapid Creek.*

I feel that *Five Hours on the TTC* would make an equally gripping tale.

There we were, a group of weary travellers — cold, starving, many of us breaking out in running sores (well, not quite, but I believe that high drama is the spice of life). In any case, things seemed quite hopeless as we waited for a bus that would perhaps never arrive. I held a secret envelope of Lipton Cup-A-Soup to my breast, praying that the smell wouldn't give me away. I was reminded of that nurse up north somewhere who, upon dying in the snow, was whipped up into some kind of Stroganoff before you could say 'Jack Rabbit' (in absence of same).

Thinking retrospectively, I don't know what I thought was the value of freeze-dried chicken-flavoured powder, sucked from a foil pouch, in the middle of a hurricane, but such are the indiscretions of the artist during times of stress.

Looking to the glorious 'Fine Arts Building', I noticed to my horror that it seemed to be falling over (but of course, it always does.)

Some comfort was derived when, inspired by the sight of a nearby Canadian flag, I led the gang in a few choruses of 'My Eyes Are Dim', an old favourite from Camp Kawabi. I will admit that it did little for one girl, who feeling nothing from the thighs down, was contemplating a life selling pencils at Bloor and Bay. I told her reassuringly that Reitman's was having a sale on half-slips. She was not amused.

With my love of the exotic, I am saddened to say that we were all saved. I would have preferred to say that we were all picked up by a police helicopter, and whisked off to the Ramada Inn for an all expense paid period of health restoring Saunas and Eucalyptus whirlpool treatments. But such is not the case in a city where Tupperware Parties and Fabricland discount sales arouse more attention than the plaintive moans of we, 'seven students in search of an ambulance'.

Study hard and make your mothers proud.
 I sign off tearfully,

D. Ian McLeod.

(P.S. "Who is Carmelita Pope, anyway?")

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