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SECOND WIND

An analysis of the farce

opinion by David Marples

What do the provincial election results mean for Alberta? There can be no doubt, of course, that Premier Lougheed has been given an overwhelming mandate to govern the province for the next four years. And the results are a tribute to his political skill and leadership, no matter how one may view his policies. But the results are disturbing in that they mark the oblivion of the opposition in this province and seriously undermine the democratic concept that theoretically governs Canadian

Assessing the returns themselves, the result implies that the campaign focused on ideology rather than on individual candidates. How else can one explain the fact that candidates who have barely uttered a sentence in the Legislature over the past four years have been returned with increased majorities? The electorate clearly voted for for free enterprise, a strong government, and one which would oppose the federal government without threatening to take this province out of Canada. In doing so, it not

Elected officials should be accountable to their constituents

only ignored alternatives, it practically denied those alternatives the right to exist. The only comparable results have occurred in elections in which the vote is manipulated, or in Eastern Europe, in which only one slate of candidates is provided. Thus while accepting the democratic result, this writer feels that steps should be taken to ensure that democracy survives in a one-party

How could this be achieved? First, the elected candidates should be accountable to their constituents. This was a platform of the WCC going into the election and a laudable one. For there is very little need for the majority of candidates in the Legislature to perform any function at all, other than to nod their collective heads in assent to Cabinet measures. Complacency is not a reflection on the characters of the candidates, it is simply an inevitable outcome of a lack of responsibility and a lack of pressure from an opposition with an alternative set of policies. If an MLA were in danger of replacement for showing complacency or inactivity, this would ensure at least that he would attend to work and the interests of his constituents. In short, the electorate would have a clear voice in the government it had elected. As it stands, the polling booth is a formality to be endured every three or

four years. Second, the West German example of proportional representation deserves consideration. From 1979-82, about 44 per cent of voters were represented by about 8 per cent of the seats. The minority vote has decreased, but it is still close to 38 per cent, which has been rewarded witha measly four seats. At the least, the NDP, which ran second in the vast majority of ridings, should be permitted to make up the opposition based on the percentage of the

Democracy, for the moment, is dead in this province

vote, rather than the testy alliance of the would-be usurpers of this role, Speaker and Buck, who together compiled less than one per cent of the vote. The NDP also represents an alternative viewpoint, one worthy of more consideration than the two seats it managed to scrape

Finally, what of the voters? Some wit once stated that Albertans "don't vote, they stampede." The comment is justified and has earned this province some uncomplimentary epithets concerning its unsophisticated voting habits. We have a Legislature where debate is minimal and the opposition utterly powerless. We have a leader who despite a certain magnetism has shown a leader, who despite a certain magnetism, has shown a marked willingness to remove dissidents in his own party in the past. PC MLAs, no matter what has been claimed to the contrary, are obliged to toe the official line or face the consequences. The voters evidently believed that a vote for the opposition was a vote for the downfall of the government. The results reveal that this was not so. In fact, the electorate has ensured that democracy, for the moment, is dead in this province, whereas, had it permitted the opposition say twenty seats, it would have ensured not only a Conservative government (the prefix Progressive is a contemptible irony), but a healthy, open-minded government that was obliged to discuss its

Proportional representation deserves consideration

policies in public and would thereby be accountable to the

The 1982 election, frankly, was a farce, and will be seen as such outside this province. One hopes that the new MLA for Norwood, Ray Martin, will bring some new ideas to a stuffy Legislature. Would that he had some help!

Staff Meeting Thursday 4:00 p.m. Rm. 282

Boycott policy will be discussed.

Be there!

STUDENTS AND STAFF

The Faculties of Dentistry, Medicine, and Rehabilitation Medicine invite you to attend their open house to mark the 75th Anniversary of the University.

Times: Friday, November 5th 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Saturday, November 6th Noon - 5:00 p.m.

Locations: **Faculty of Dentistry** Faculty of Medicine

> Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine **Dentistry-Pharmacy Building** Medical Sciences Building

Corbett Hall

Included in each open house will be tours of facilities, demonstrations of equipment, explanations of current research, and displays depicting the history of the faculty.

There will also be many displays in which visitors may participate.

For information please call the Office of the Registrar (432-4537) or the Office of Community Relations (432-2325).



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