

ALTERNATIVE ELECTION COVERAGE

Bored with conventional election coverage, The Gazette decided to take a look at election night in the campaign headquarters of Halifax-Citadel's three candidates. For once, election coverage that does not include Gallup polls, political pundits or aging anchormen. We selected three politically naive arts writers, sent them out on election night and told them to report back with what they saw and heard. The following are their reports:

Crushing Liberal defeat

BY PATRICK SHAUNESSY

On Tuesday night I took a cab down to the south side of Halifax to what appeared to be a fairly vacant Hollis street. As I stepped out of the cab and looked into Ed Kinley's small campaign office, I wondered if I was in the right place.

Despite its unassuming appearance, the office was absolutely chaotic: telephones were ringing off the hook, people were shouting out polling results and others were writing them down on a large banner. Ed Kinley was nowhere to be seen. I took a seat and watched.

More and more supporters of Ed Kinley started to fill the office. Before long there were trays of free food being offered, followed by free pop and beer. Things were now looking better for your humble reporter who was, on first impression, expecting the evening to be somewhat boring — even though the incoming results proved my initial assumption to be cynical and teetering on the verge of ignorance.

A crowd had amassed by a television set in the corner of the room. Everyone eagerly watched the CBC coverage of the voting results. There was a hesitant enthusiasm among the people in the office as Kinley seemed to be holding an early yet marginal lead. I watched bits and pieces of the coverage, but at the same time I was more concerned with observing the activity in the office and consuming the complimentary refreshments.

For the next hour and a half, the chaos in the office changed form. The phones had stopped ringing since most of the votes had been tallied, but the activity in the office had increased exponentially. There was now a healthy mix of supporters, journalists, television reporters, along with Kinley's friends and family.

Everywhere people were coming and going talking of Ed Kinley, but he was nowhere to be seen. Suddenly the news broke that the Liberals, under the now re-elected Russell MacLellan, had a minority government. The reaction to the news was both surprise and indifference. As one fellow solemnly put it, the result was "shocking but predictable".

Then at exactly 9:33 p.m., the man himself arrived. Kinley stepped through the door to the sound of "Ed! Ed! Ed!". He was instantly greeted by reporters who wasted no time in bombarding the candidate with questions — for Kinley's riding was the only one which hadn't finished tabulating its results. The race between Delefos and Kinley remained extremely close — so much that no one in the office had any clear indication of who was ahead. Despite all this, Kinley seemed enthusiastic about

the whole affair, describing the race as a "cliffhanger". Many of the people were cheering loudly with excitement, while at the same time crossing their fingers.

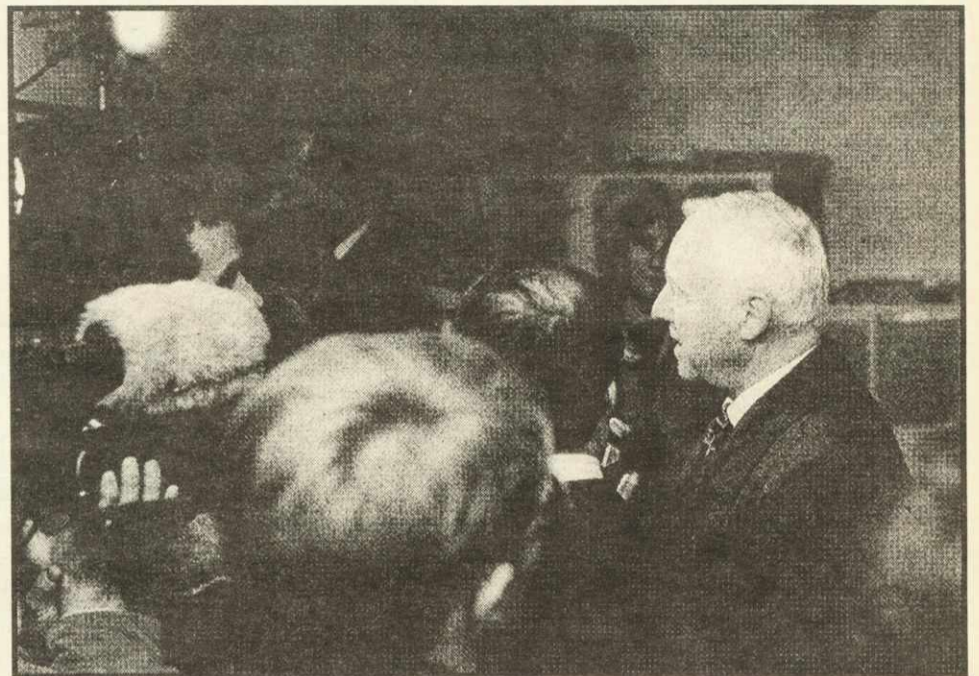
As the final few votes rolled in, it became clear that Kinley had lost his seat by 125 votes.

The atmosphere became so depressing it was as if I was at a funeral. The disappointment was overwhelming. In fact, the moment seemed so emotional and personal that I felt I should have been elsewhere.

After the results were finalized, Kinley made a brief speech. He congratulated Delefos and then turned his attention to his campaign

team — thanking them for all their hard work. And finally he wished MacLellan and the Liberals the best of luck.

I can't tell you how depressing the whole thing was. The entire Liberal contingent in this riding is closer than most families. In one moment their hopes had been crushed.



Ed Kinley schmoozin' with the press. (Photo by Ryan Lash)



PC campaign worker watches the results come in. (Photo by Barry Goldberg)

A 'red' in blue clothing Hammin' it up at PC central

BY GREG MCFARLANE

The phone rings and a hush goes over the office, but just for a split-second. Someone yells for a party hack to run to the phone. And as he hurries toward it, another phone jumps off the hook at the other end of the sparsely furnished room. A young woman races towards it. I back towards the wall, and two sets of elbows going in different directions graze my chest.

The mood was still intense at the headquarters of Progressive Conservative candidate Tara Erskine even after it became painfully

obvious that she was the odd woman out in a two candidate race between Liberal Ed Kinley and New Democrat Peter Delefos.

A smattering of applause ran through the tightly packed office-turned-campaign headquarters on Quinpool road as the TV announced PC Bedford candidate Peter Christie inching ahead of his Liberal rival.

But Erskine supporters were proud of their candidate too, and the mood was decidedly upbeat considering her defeat.

Erskine was optimistic despite the loss.

"I'm very happy and not disappointed," Erskine said in a concession speech just an hour-and-a-half after polls closed across the province, but long before the riding

was actually decided.

Erskine's riding of Halifax-Citadel was the last to be decided in the province. Delefos topped Kinley by 125 votes, while both topped Erskine by more than 2,000.

"We started from scratch and look how far we came.

"I'm looking at this for the long haul," she said to wild cheers from the party faithful.

The crowd was stuck to the TV for the rest of the night, waiting to find out if Kinley or Delefos would win the race for Halifax-Citadel. The room was filled with about 50 television junkies fighting for a spot near the TV. I had the impulse to yell, "down in front!" But I refrained. And, not wanting to be the free-

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The New Democrats strut their stuff

BY DAVE MACDONALD

The Lord Nelson Ballroom played host to the orange tide in this month's provincial election. At the beginning of the evening, the New Democratic Party's headquarters was stacked with tons of finger food and beer tickets to keep the few people there happy.

The ballroom was divided into two rooms, both with three TVs and a crowd of couch potatoes. As the first few polls came in, there were a few hollers and cheers, but nothing to get excited about.

Slowly the crowd grew until I had to fight to get a glimpse of the election coverage on the boob-tubes. All eyes and minds were focussed on the local Halifax-Citadel and they were not hesitant to let you know that they wanted Peter Delefos to win.

Soon the mass got restless and wanted some satisfaction in the way of elected officials. Luckily enough, several NDP candidates throughout the province started to get elected,

and as a result, the people were getting louder and more demanding. The only lulls in noise were the occasional defeat to other parties.

The first chance I got to eyeball any politician was after most of the polls were in and it was inevitable that a minority Liberal government would be formed. Unlike the other candidates for Halifax-Citadel, the Gazette was denied access to Delefos' actual campaign office — it makes you wonder what was going on down there.

Anyway, when the "big boys" decided to show, the mob of supporters clung to them as if they were the second coming of Christ. Hugging, kissing, shaking hands — general, old fashioned sucking up.

When the time came for the big speeches to be given, the Halifax-Citadel riding was still undecided.

While those already elected stepped onto the stage, a cameraman for a local TV station tried to get the interpreter for the hearing impaired off the stage. Why? Because she was in the way of his camera. It seems

that it mattered more to him that he got a clear shot of platform rather than getting the hearing impaired involved in the festivities.

NDP leader Robert Chislm congratulated all of the NDP winners for a job well done, and took pride in having five women elected to office. The federal NDP leader, Alexa McDonough, followed with a very encouraging 'take pride' speech.

Throughout the speeches there was

a feeling of tension and nervousness. Delefos was in a neck-and-neck race with Liberal incumbent Ed Kinley and it was the very last poll to come in. A Hollywood script writer could not have plotted more of a nail-biter.

When Delefos' victory was announced, the partying began. Loads of mingling and congratulating ensued, and an overall sense of, "We sure showed them," prevailed.

I guess you could say that the NDP liberally kicked ass.

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