

The Life and Times of Paul MacEwan

by Alan Christensen

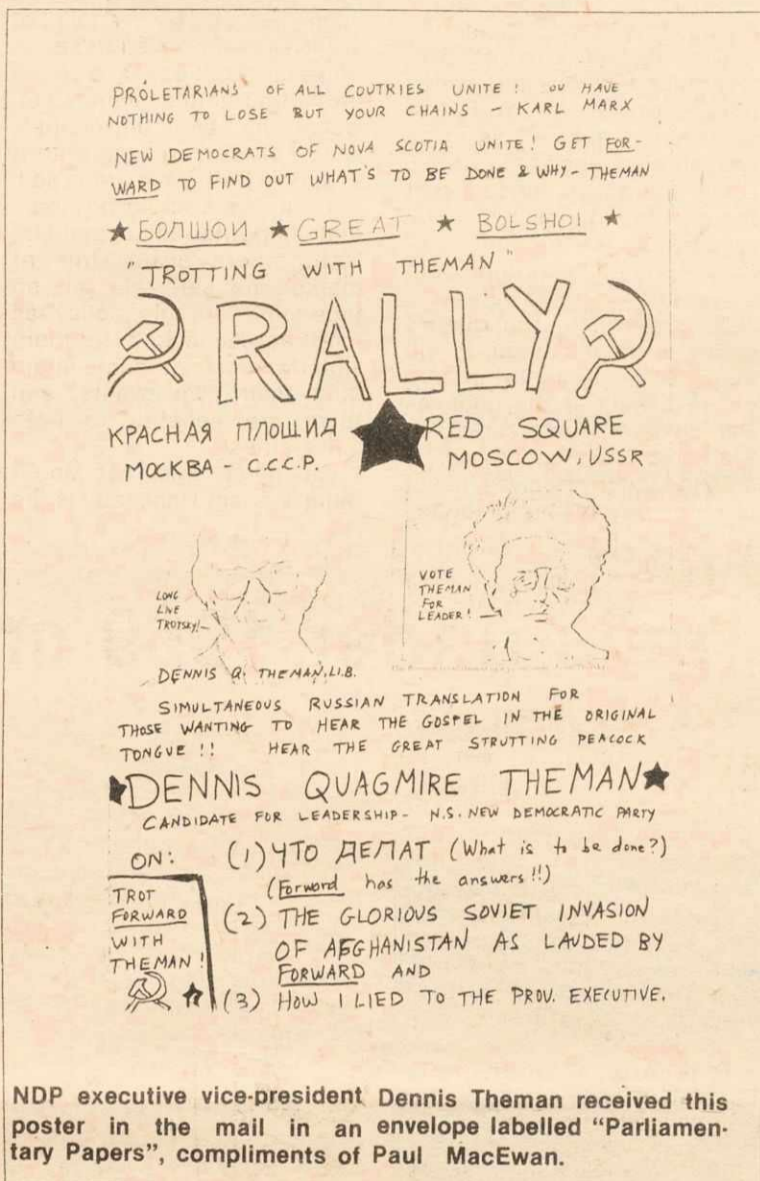
On July 7, 1980 Paul MacEwan, the NDP MLA for Cape Breton Nova, lost his final appeal against the provincial New Democratic Party and was officially expelled from the party because, according to the Provincial Council, he was "intolerant towards other views, he promoted factionalism within the party, he had engaged in vendettas against other party members, he had engaged in financial irregularities, and he had made damaging statements to the press while knowing them to be distorted or false."

It was, however, his statements to the press that there are "Trotskyite elements" in the party that finally caused the party to take action. Behind these controversies lies over a year of bitter infighting and controversy in the ranks of the provincial NDP.

Last year MacEwan distributed a document obtained by the Gazette, entitled "Suggested Administrative Changes in Cape Breton County." The paper accuses the Liberals of "packing" county offices "with Liberal heelers and hacks" who, he stated, he wanted removed if the NDP were successful in winning the county elections. This, he said, was necessary because these officials would "work night and day to destroy" the NDP county government. The MLA said that he wanted to be rid of the "ringleaders" and went through the entire list of county officials naming those that should be removed or investigated.

This was ruled to be "contrary to the principles of the New Democratic Party" at a special executive meeting and all provincial committees. The MLA protested the decision saying that Robert's Rules or Order should have been followed.

In October Dennis Theman, who had beaten MacEwan for the position of Executive Vice-President at the last convention, wrote an article in the New Democrat, a provincial party newspaper, entitled "Organizing for 1982" in which he called on members of the party to start organizing for the expected 1982 provincial election. At the conclusion of the article Theman included a list of reading material which, he said, members could use to broaden their "knowledge of what has to be done and why." Included in this list, obtained from the national headquarters of the party, was a magazine called FORWARD which is published in Toronto by left-wing members of the New Democratic Party. Soon after MacEwan distributed a letter making some criticisms of the party newspaper. In this letter the MLA accused Theman of trying to "tell us what to read" and labelled the Toronto magazine as a "Trot-



NDP executive vice-president Dennis Theman received this poster in the mail in an envelope labelled "Parliamentary Papers", compliments of Paul MacEwan.

skyite Bradsheet." He said that "elements" within the party were trying to "implement anyone but Akerman or MacEwan's policy." He also said that people should be encouraged to subscribe to COMMONWEALTH, a magazine put out by the Saskatchewan NDP. This magazine had also been on Theman's list.

Later, MacEwan formed the Cape Breton County NDP committee and solicited funds from Moosehead Breweries and Atlantic Trust. This, he said, was to be used for upcoming county elections. The companies had said, according to the NDP provincial office, that they had given the money on the specification that part of it should go to Alexa McDonough campaign in the federal election. The money was sent to Box 1, Whitney Pier, Sydney and nobody in the Halifax office knew of it until Atlantic Trust came looking for a receipt. The provincial office said that they had not received any money and that in any case accepting money from corporations is against the constitution of the party. Dennis Theman then recommended that the RCMP be called to investigate the matter so that the party would not be implicated if there were any illegalities committed by MacEwan. The RCMP were contacted but have never made any moves against MacEwan.

Soon after this Theman and other members of the executive started receiving anonymous letters which Theman called "hate mail." Theman received many letters labelling him a "Trotskyite" and several "posters for the Theman for Leader campaign." The posters included one with a drawing of Theman dressed in a Communist uniform surrounded by stars, hammers and sickles and Russian writing. Following this Theman sent out a letter in which he criticized MacEwan's statements about him in his criticism of the New Democrat and accused the MLA of being intolerant. Theman further stated that he was not a "Trotskyite," but that even if he or others in the party were MacEwan had no right to attack them.

In April Theman received a letter from MacEwan which contained a draft of a document called "Dennis Q. Theman's Confession of his Trotskyism." MacEwan wrote in an introductory letter, "This material, and other related items demonstrating your communistic, non-NDP learnings are being prepared and I shall make a decision over the next little while as to what action to take next."

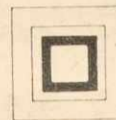
Shortly after party leader Jerry Akerman resigned in May, MacEwan stated to members of the press that there were "Trotskyite elements" on the provincial executive.



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