

Progressives learning to COPE

By DAVID OLIE

ON THE SURFACE IT'S BEEN a fairly quiet municipal election campaign here in Halifax. Mayor Ron Wallace has been acclaimed for another three-year term of office, as has Ward Four councillor Nick Meagher. Six of the remaining wards have only two candidates each. There have been no major rallies to date, and even all-candidates meetings have been few and sparsely attended. It would be easy to sleep through this campaign, as no doubt many have.

Things have been somewhat more exciting in Dartmouth, especially with the four-way race

to replace retiring mayor Dan Brownlow. But even there the outward appearance is "business as usual."

Beneath the quiet surface, though, a major shift is taking place, a shift away from the way municipal politics have traditionally been conducted in Metro. This year, for the first time, progressives and left-leaning citizens are making an effort to band together to evict some of the more noxious tenants from their seats on city council.

Surprisingly, this aspect of the campaign has not received much attention from the press. It's surprising because many of the "progressive" candidates are more or less openly announcing their pol-

itical leanings to the public. John Murchie, school board candidate in Halifax Wards One, Two and Three, mentions his position on the NDP provincial council in his campaign literature. Darrell Dexter, council candidate in Dartmouth Ward Three, talks about "Neanderthals" on the current council. And Tessa Hebb, candidate for council in Halifax Ward Eleven, ran for the NDP in the federal riding of Halifax in 1984.

The progressives are out there, and they're running hard.

They're organized, too, after a fashion. For example, Hebb says she considered running for council all along, even before she ran federally, but couldn't decide

whether to run in Ward Eleven or Ward Two. She says when she realized Brenda Shannon, another "progressive", was going to offer in Ward Two, she settled on Eleven, so as not to split the "progressive" vote. Shannon, who served on council for five years prior to 1982, is known to have connections with the Liberal party.

For a time leading up to the campaign there was talk in NDP circles of running a "slate" of candidates across Metro to try to capitalize on recent successes for the party in federal and provincial contests. The last federal vote saw Hebb make a strong third place showing, with over 21 per cent of the popular vote, the best percentage for any NDP candidate in the Atlantic region. And in the provincial contest the NDP did even better, winning over one-third of the vote in the four provincial seats that make up the federal Halifax riding, re-electing Alexa MacDonough in Halifax Chebucto and placing second in the other three. It's no accident, for example, that Hebb's Ward Eleven comprises a large chunk of MacDonough's Halifax Chebucto.

After considerable in-house discussion the NDP decided not to run a slate under the party banner. Party politics do not now form an official part of civic affairs in Nova Scotia, and the NDP felt there could be a public backlash against an openly partisan campaign. Nevertheless, the party has opened its resources to "friendly" municipal candidates, although it has not made financial contributions, and passed a motion of support at its last provincial convention for those members planning to seek civic office.

Not only the NDP is carrying the progressive banner. Just two weeks before the Oct. 19 vote the "Tie One On" campaign was launched in Halifax. This campaign, organized by a loose association of lefties and progressives, is particularly concerned about the issue of development in the city, and is making a strong pitch to get candidates elected who are friendly to their views.

"Tie One On" is a natural outgrowth of a whole collection of campaigns and committees which have been battling with council over the past three years on this issue. Few observers could have expected the Friends of the Public Gardens to abstain from this election after having fought so long to preserve the Hart-Butler property, and indeed they are active in the "Tie One On" campaign. One feels in talking to these people that they have a sense of mission, that they have a score to settle with certain of their foes on council. In the words of a button worn by many in the campaign, "If council won't plan for change, plan to change the Council."

How much impact "Tie One On" will have on the elections is anyone's guess, but in some close races it could provide the deciding factor. Shannon, for one, is happy to have the campaign's backing, while Murchie is op-

enly announcing his Executive Board position in the Friends of the Public Gardens.

Basically, these candidates believe the development issue is the key in shaping the future of the city. The Municipal Development Plan (MDP), drawn up in the late seventies, is intended to preserve the community character and environment of the city, while allowing for development in step with that character. Most progressives feel the current council has violated the letter and spirit of the MDP by approving such controversial development as the United Equities proposal for the Hart-Butler property, the proposed apartment-condo complex on the Edmonds Grounds in Armdale, and the proposed hotel development on the site of the Green Lantern building on Barrington Street. If the current council remains in power, many feel the MDP will lose all credibility and become a dead letter.

What becomes apparent in examining this civic campaign is that Metro is taking its first tentative steps toward municipal party politics.

This isn't to say party politics in the sense of Tory, Liberal and NDP. Although these traditional structures will play a role in the new movement, what Metro residents are really doing is learning to COPE.

COPE (Committee of Progressive Electors) is a phenomenon of recent years in many major cities across Canada. A COPE organization brings together progressive candidates under a common recognized banner and makes sure there is at least one in every ward. Voters need not puzzle out a candidate's stand on progressive issues; the COPE affiliation tells the tale, for better or for worse.

This does not make COPE a party. Rather, it is a loose coalition of candidates and voters, bringing together Red Tories, left liberals, New Democrats and, in Vancouver at least, (gasp!) communists. There is, however, no party platform as such, no party funding, no formal leadership, or any of the other hundred and one things that constitute a real political party.

And, of course, the existence of a COPE group in Metro would not suddenly bring party politics into the municipal arena, because party politics are already there. Few can reasonably question the political stripes of most of our city councillors. Mayor Wallace, for example, is a former Liberal provincial cabinet minister. Former mayor Edmund Morris came to city hall after being in Parliament as a Tory MP, and after his stint as mayor became a member of the provincial cabinet under John Buchanan. Despite his claims of neutrality while in the mayor's office, there can be little doubt where Morris' heart lay.

Since the establishment is already well represented in our civic politics, it's about time progressives got on the ball and began taking a piece of the political action for themselves. It's time for a change. It's time to learn to COPE.

One more into the African breach

By JAMES KADYAMPAKENI

JAMIE GLAZOV'S "VIEW OF Africa" (*the Gazette*, Oct. 3) is an argument as old as hypocrisy in the world. It basically states that if you can't reform all the evils of Africa at once, then don't attempt to reform anything and specifically do not single out apartheid.

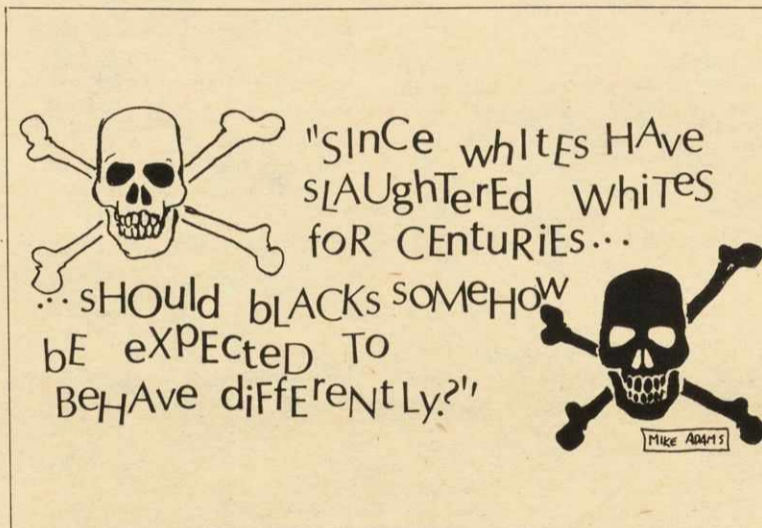
Glazov will be happy to know that he belongs to a long and honoured conservative tradition. Those who favoured the slave trade argued that women and children in the factories of Britain were treated worse than black slaves in America. From that they went on to claim that until these white factory "slaves" had their lives improved blacks should be happy to remain slaves. Had they won the support of public opinion we would of course be still happily experiencing black plantation slavery and white factory slavery.

Such an argument is one which leads to political inactivity. This is why it is often associated with Conservatism, and Glazov is hardly alone since the *Globe and Mail* identifies as many as ten Conservative M.P.'s in Ottawa as pro-apartheid.

We are suffering through a period of Conservatism such that we have to take the Jamie Glazovs seriously. Who knows, he may be our external affairs minister a few years down the line. This writer finds Glazov racist, very inaccurate in his facts on Africa and very unaware of what's going on in South Africa. He needs more reading on the subject.

This does not damn him. He has his right to his view but in Canada, at least, it is often necessary to define racism because many fail to recognize it. Glazov seems to feel that there is something inherently wrong for blacks to be killing whites. Since whites have slaughtered whites for centuries, should blacks somehow be expected to behave differently?

Ignorance may be bliss but in the hands of Glazov it normally becomes humorous. Ignorance also becomes ominous since all of the facts



have been bent in one specific direction. One of the most hilarious statements includes "Tanzania was once prosperous under British rule." When the British departed the average annual per capita income of Tanzania was about 50 dollars. That, in Glazov's view, represents great prosperity. Where did Glazov ever get the idea of prosperity in Tanzania? The debate over development in Tanzania is whether greater progress could have been achieved under capitalism than under the socialist planning which has characterized Nyerere's rule. However, not even wild-cowboy capitalists have quite suggested "prosperity" in Tanzania under colonialism.

It is further absolutely false that under Nyerere there has been "hundreds of executions." Surely there are numerous African leaders about which such a statement would be true. Glazov chooses one of the few for which it is false.

Glazov as expected parades the image of Amin. I would have thought Idi Amin was as atypical of modern Africa as Hitler was of the Europe of his day. It was Nyerere who rid Africa of Idi Amin but Glazov does not point that out.

Finally, for 20 million blacks in South Africa there are no human rights, therefore abuses in other African countries could not be far worse. The South African government does not even pretend to human rights for blacks.

Since whites argue that blacks are not citizens there is no question of rights. So Glazov bringing South Africa into the human rights discussion is irrelevant and humorous.

Glazov praises South Africa for allowing its black "citizens" to leave the country. He seems unaware that South Africa would be delighted if all 20 million black citizens left the country. Again South Africa is unique. South Africa has been seeking to deport them all for two decades. It would then hope to bring them back as aliens. Such a policy has a multitude of economic, social and political advantages. If Bishop Tutu wanted to leave South Africa, Botha would probably purchase his one-way ticket.

This writer is part of the "circle" at Dalhousie University which concerns itself with African issues. This "circle" consists of a number of people engaged in academic research on African topics and its epicentre is probably in the Centre for African Studies. Glazov is a stranger to the circle but he bitterly complains about the lack of concern about black Africa and the focus on South or White Africa. If Glazov informed himself, the circle at Dalhousie is concerned about a host of African problems. But the riots and liberation struggle in South Africa has forced itself on the attention of people such as Glazov.