

Pierre Elliott Trudeau resigns as Leader of the Opposition

Former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau took fellow members of Parliament by surprise recently when he announced he was stepping down from the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Mr. Trudeau, who was Prime Minister for 11 years before being defeated in last May's general election, announced his resignation at a caucus meeting, November 21. "There is no easy way or ideal time to leave and there are always strong public and private reasons both for going and for staying on. At a point in time, one simply makes the decision as to what is best," stated Mr. Trudeau.



Pierre Elliott Trudeau

Mr. Trudeau said that his party was in the process of rethinking policies and of "rebuilding its organization to be ready to return to office". "In my view, one element of that renewal should be a change of leaders with the Quebec referendum facing Canada, presumably late next spring. I want to assure all Canadians that wherever I am or whatever I do I will continue to work and fight for our country," he said.

Varied career

Before entering federal politics, Mr. Trudeau had a varied career. In 1961, he was appointed law professor at the University of Montreal, where he taught constitutional law. He was a civil rights activist, one of the leaders of the 1949 asbestos strike, and editor of *Cité Libre*, a periodical devoted to fighting the policies of

then Quebec premier Maurice Duplessis.

He travelled abroad widely, including China and the Soviet Union, as well as undertaking extensive post-graduate studies at the London School of Economics and Ecole des sciences politiques in Paris.

Political background

Mr. Trudeau was first elected in 1965 in the Montreal constituency of Mont Royal. Subsequently he:

- was appointed federal Minister of Justice on April 4, 1967 by former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson;
- was elected Liberal leader in April 1968 to replace Mr. Pearson;
- swept the country on June 25, 1968 to his first electoral victory as leader, winning 155 seats in the House of Commons, compared to 72 for the Conservatives, 22 for the New Democratic Party and 14 for the Social Credits;
- invoked the War Measures Act in October 1970 to deal with FLQ kidnappings of Quebec Labour Minister Pierre Laporte (who was murdered) and British diplomat James Cross (who was later released);
- avoided defeat by a narrow margin in the October 31, 1972 election, retaining power in a minority Parliament with 109 seats, compared to Conservative leader Robert Stanfield's 107;
- was forced into another election when the Opposition combined to defeat his Government over its budget in May 1974 and won a majority of 141 seats in the July 8, 1974 election;
- lost the federal election of last May 22, winning 114 seats to the Conservatives 136 and surrendering his job as Prime Minister to Joe Clark, June 4.

Policies

Among Mr. Trudeau's major policies and programs over the years were:

- imposition of wage-price-profit controls between 1975 and 1978 to battle inflation;
- enrichment and inflation indexation of Federal Government social benefits, such as pensions, family allowances and welfare;
- creation of a number of departments, such as Consumer and Corporate Affairs, Environment, Regional Economic Expansion and Urban Affairs (subsequently abandoned);
- reform of the income tax system in



NFB photo by C. Lund

Mr. Trudeau at the 1968 Liberal leadership convention in Ottawa. Donald Macdonald, to the right of Mr. Trudeau, is reported to be a possible contender as leader of the Liberal Party.

1972 to make the rich pay proportionately more in taxes;

- fivefold rise in federal spending from \$10.8 billion in the 1968-69 fiscal year to \$53 billion in the present fiscal year;
- relaxation of abortion laws and laws affecting homosexuals;
- abolition of capital punishment;
- the implementation of an Official Languages Act to permit Canadians to deal with the Federal Government in French or English;
- imposition of an oil subsidy for imports into Eastern Canada and holding down of the Canadian price for oil and other energy below world prices.

Tributes

When Mr. Trudeau entered the House of Commons after making his announcement to the Liberal caucus, he was greeted by several standing ovations from members of all parties. Prime Minister Joe Clark introduced, as the first item of business, a motion, that was adopted unanimously — that this "House express its gratitude and appreciation to the Right Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his service to this House, to his party and to his country, and express its hope that he will continue as the Right Honourable member of Mont Royal to contribute his for-

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