

Flora MacDonald — her drive for leadership

by Kathy O'Brien

Flora MacDonald is certainly a better speaker than her would-be predecessor (i.e. The present Leader) as those 30 or so students who attended a question and answer session last Thursday in the S.U.B. would no doubt readily testify. As a proclaimed contender for the leadership of the Conservative party she was posed with questions of every type, ranging from wage and price controls to the environment of the Arctic. She answered all of these in a manner indicating that she was both well informed and competent. However, it is not likely that Miss MacDonald will be the next Prime Minister of Canada. This not primarily due to her claim that it is easier to become elected Prime Minister than leader of P.C.'s, (which may, in fact, be true), but to her inability to deal with that problem which has prevented recent Conservative leaders from taking power -- namely, Quebec.

At the outset of her introductory remarks, Miss MacDonald indicated that she felt the party had been "well and ably" led by Mr. Stanfield and she regretted his relinquishing the party's reins of power. Later, responding to a question, she stated that many Canadians were now dissatisfied with P.M. Trudeau just as they had been in 1972 when Mr. Stanfield would have formed the government except for the failure of the Conservative party to attract support in Quebec. Here lies the root of the Conservative problem and the reason for their lack of electoral success. And if Miss MacDonald, as the future leader of the Conservative party, can offer Quebec only what Robert Stanfield did, then she will fail there, and probably in the country as a whole, just as surely as did he.

Regarding the Party's lack of success in Quebec, Miss MacDonald pointed out that in a survey published last week, Quebecers appeared to be in favor of some viable third option apart from separatism or the ("corrupt", she charged) present Liberal regime. Here, she indicated, exists an opportunity for the Conservative party to step in and pick up the support of those who are dissatisfied.

But can they do it? My guess is that they can't, or at least not in the next election, the reason being the successful polarization of the political climate in Quebec since Prime Minister Trudeau's advent to power. In the early 1960's Prime Minister Pearson's indecisiveness regarding Quebec's demands arising from the "Quiet Revolution" had resulted in a *de facto*, though not officially sanctioned special status for that province. People became concerned that the situation would eventually slide into separation and so Trudeau rode into victory in 1968 with a platform proclaiming that Quebec was a



Flora MacDonald speaking to Dal student. Kerry Delorey / Photo

province "like any other". Election campaigns in Quebec then took on the aspect of "either-or", that is, either you voted Liberal and federalist or you voted Parti Quebecois and separatist.

Such a situation, obviously, is not politically healthy. If electors are dissatisfied with Liberal policy they have no alternate way to express their dissatisfaction but in voting separatist. The Conservative Party has been unable to provide Quebec with a viable third option for two reasons. Firstly, French antipathy to the Conservatives is deep-rooted, stemming back at least to conscription, not to mention Louis Riel, and has come again into focus in the past decade over the issue of official bilingualism. During the debates on the Official Languages Act the Conservative Party split down the middle. Stanfield and the majority of the party supported the doctrine of Official Bilingualism while John Diefenbaker led a dozen Tories (including Jack Horner, another candidate for the party leadership) in opposition to the Bill. The press had a field day and it was little wonder that the Conservatives did so poorly in Quebec in the following election.

But even if the party rift is mended and forgotten by the time of the next federal election (which is doubtful), the odds are still against the Conservatives picking up the amount of support essential for national victory. This is because the party as yet (including Miss MacDonald) has nothing to offer Quebec except what Mr. Stanfield tried and failed. Namely, the same thing the Liberals are offering, federalism with official bilingualism in federal institutions. If both Liberals and Conservatives are offering the deal, why should voters

alternative, the voter **must** support the Conservative Party. To say the least, the Liberals and the P.Q.'s are going to use their efforts to ensure that this does **not** occur.

But what alternative has the Conservative party? Miss MacDonald rejects special status (other than on a cultural basis) which is an intelligent decision as she would otherwise invoke the wrath of the remaining 9 provinces. She indicated that her approach would be to try and win the support of the average man by dealing with economic issues and not to try and change the views of the elite of the province which she considers a previous mistake of the Party. She cited the electoral success of the Creditiste Party as a result of using this same method of appealing to the dissatisfied average man.

Will it work? As a "new" third option for Quebec voters it smacks oddly of "Stanfieldism", does not create a distinctive difference between Liberal and Conservative party Quebec policy, or erase the "anti-French" image of the party. Yet, let us wish Miss MacDonald good luck (she will need it) because anything which could de-polarize Quebec politics would be an improvement over the present situation. But in any case, if Miss MacDonald succeeds in winning the leadership of the Conservative Party, she may not sweep the province of Quebec in the next election with her present views, but she will undoubtedly do better for the Conservatives than would Jack Horner, though probably less well than would Claude Wagner.

opt for the latter? At least the Liberal record of dealings with Quebec has been cleaner since the turn of the century, and they have a leader who is "one of their own".

According to Miss MacDonald, Conservative support in Quebec will arise from those who reject Liberal government and separatism. The onus, then, of Conservative success seems to rest on these parties making such a deplorable mess of Quebec's affairs that for want of any

Value of anti-calendar

The responsibility of the Course Evaluation Committee Chairperson is to ensure that all the things involved in producing some sort of anti-calendar get done, which is not really as easy as it seems since you also have to find people to do them or put in the time yourself.

The steps are: (1) Make up a questionnaire, (2) Get it printed, (3) find out who teaches how many students what, (4) distribute to the "who"'s sufficient questionnaires for their students, (5) collect the completed questionnaires, (6) (assuming you are using machine analysis) get the data keypunched,

(7) have a programme written to do the analysis, (8) get the results of your analysis, (9) lay them out in booklet form and send to printer, (10) distribute the booklets.

There are two approaches that can be taken; (A) knowing how to do the various steps so that you take care of everything yourself in which case you will be putting in something like five hundred hours work between now and May or June; (B) knowing where to find people with all these skills in which case it will take you about one hundred hours.

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