

The Issues

Everyone was well aware of the pitfalls before the election was called. The media hoped beyond reasonable expectation that this might be an issue-oriented campaign in which Canadians would have real choices outlined clearly before them. Instead the media became complacent in turning this election into one of image and electoral strategy. Policy statements seldom dominated the front pages, while polls grabbed the spotlight, turning the election into a kind of political stock market. Publics were supposed to jump on or off a party's bandwagon according to how their performances stacked up.

The heated exchanges between the parties involved issues that seldom touched the welfare of the average Canadian. Although the patronage appointments that kicked off the campaign put an ugly pallor over the Turner effort, the staid debate that followed offered little or no hope for Canadians with more pressing concerns, such as high interest rates, and unemployment.

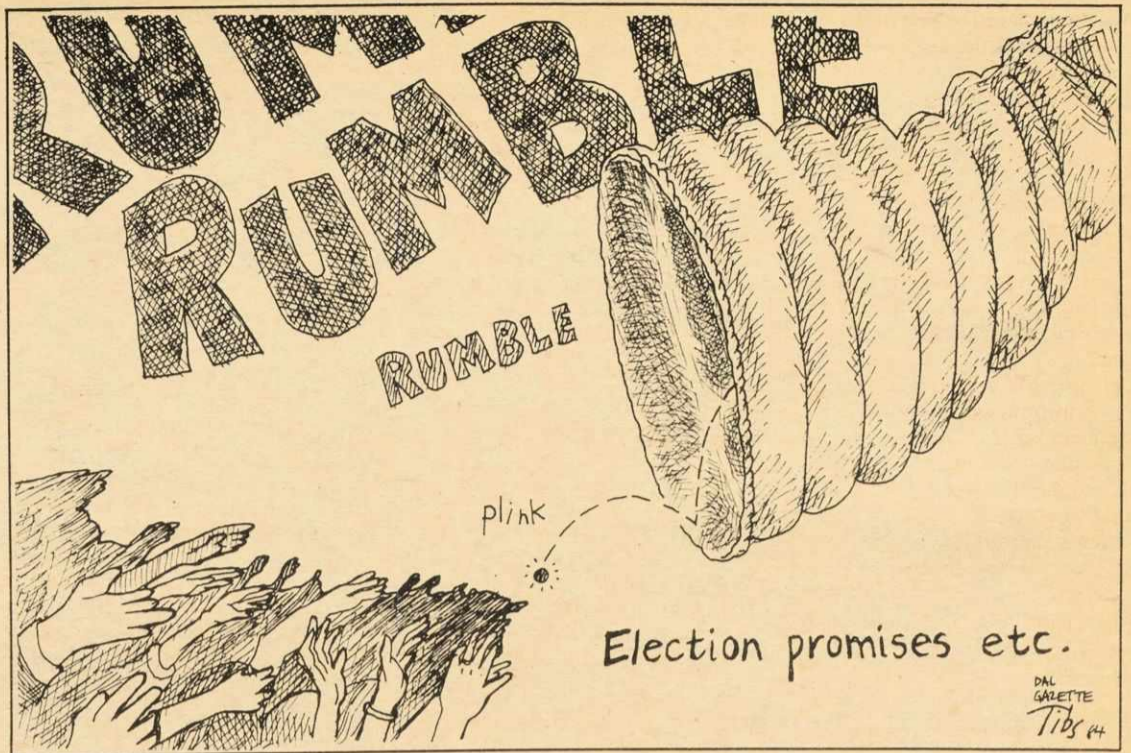
The leaders questioned each other's integrity frequently. Turner called Mulroney a "let's pretend Liberal." Mulroney constantly linked Turner to the Liberal's recent unpopular past. Ed Broadbent called the other two "the Bobbsey twins of Bay Street."

Petty name calling filled in the void left by a lack of serious differ-

ences in policy. They want to reduce the deficit, although none are outlining how. They all want tax reform. They all want to beef up Canada's conventional armed forces. They all want to retain social services. They all are respecting the principles of the national energy programme. They all want to reduce unemployment, but again none are saying how. They all support the aspirations of the women's movement.

In a rush to the political centre the three major political parties have created a kind of political totalitarianism with democratic structure.

The *Gazette* looks at some of the issues that have lurked around the peripheries of this election and examines what differences we could find in the platforms of the three major parties.



Pushing the peace button

By CATHY McDONALD

All three parties have been pushing the peace button this election campaign.

A Gallup poll result released early in the campaign made the nuclear weapons freeze a prominent election issue. Fully 85 per cent of Canadians favour a mutual and verifiable nuclear weapons freeze, the poll showed.

The Liberals and the NDP have both tried to appeal to peace movement sympathies, with the NDP's full endorsement of the peace movement's election agenda, and the Liberals' considerable variations on the nuclear weapons freeze issue.

The Progressive Conservatives tried to downplay the issue, making the decrepit state of the Canadian Forces their prime defense issue.

The NDP has identified strongly with the Canadian peace movement,

supporting among other things a freeze on the testing and development of nuclear weapons, including the controversial cruise missile testing in Alberta. The party points to other nations that oppose NATO policies by refusing the cruise, saying if Canada is serious about stopping the arms race, it should do the same.

Both the Liberal and PC parties hoped to show their concern for world peace by strongly endorsing former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's peace initiative. Liberal Leader John Turner said he will continue Trudeau's efforts to bring leaders of nuclear powers together to discuss the issue. Turner wrote to U.S. President Ronald Reagan and Soviet President Konstantin Chernenko during the campaign, and also appointed a new Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament, Aug. 17.

The Progressive Conservatives have said very little about a nuclear weapons freeze. Although former leader Joe Clark reported in late July on his findings from a cross-Canada commission into the nuclear arms issue—launched at the peak of Trudeau's peace initiative—Tory Leader Brian Mulroney has not released it.

PC External Affairs critic Flora MacDonald made an extremely cautious statement Aug. 16 in support of a freeze, "provided it doesn't lock in nuclear superiority on either side." Mulroney supports the cruise testing, and views any move to stop it as a unilateral disarmament action.

The most fun over the freeze issue has been in the Liberal camp, when party president Iona Campagnolo departed from government policy Aug. 8 to support a nuclear weapons freeze and no cruise missile testing. Six Liberal candidates quickly followed her lead, including former aide to Trudeau, Jim Coutts. Finally, on Aug. 24, Turner admitted to endorsing the freeze "personally," but explained as Prime Minister he had no choice but to stand behind Canada's allies in developing the cruise missile.

Meanwhile, the Progressive Conservatives have attacked the Liberals for neglecting Canada's Armed Forces, pledging to increase the force size by 8,000 and return distinctive uniforms to the three divisions. While Mulroney did not announce the cost for this, Turner estimated a \$580 million price tag.

The Liberals oppose a return to the three uniforms, away from the current unified green uniform, saying the money would be better spent on tools. At the same time, the Turner

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Coalition continues ad campaign

By RICK JANSON

While interest groups across the country vie for headlines in this summer's election, there is one group that has long been content to buy their way into Canadian newspapers.

Since 1967, the National Citizens' Coalition has been purchasing ad space in Canadian newspapers to espouse their right wing views of "more freedom through less government."

Recently, the 30,000-member group defeated the government's Bill C-169 in an Alberta court challenge. The legislation originally placed restrictions on the type of advertising a non-political party could sponsor during an election. The proposed restrictions would have meant the cost of advertising "directly promoting or opposing a candidate or a political party during an election" would be subject to election expense ceilings. The government declined to appeal the court's decision.

On July 19 the NCC ran a full page ad in the national edition of the *Globe and Mail* trumpeting their victory:

"Federal politicians didn't want you to read this ad... Now that we are free to speak out, the Coalition would like to tell you about the six issues on our Agenda for Canadians."

Based on a Gallup poll the Coalition sponsored in March, the ad states that Canadians—and the NCC—want Petrocan and other crown corporations sold, the federal government forced by law to balance the budget, an end to indexed pensions for MP's, private

Six issues Canadians should make Politicians debate:

Our Agenda for Canadians.

Federal politicians didn't want you to read this ad. That's why all three major parties passed Bill C-169 in a splendid show of togetherness. Bill C-169 was designed to stifle freedom of speech and make this election a closed shop for politicians. The politicians would have succeeded if the National Citizens' Coalition hadn't overturned the law through a landmark, constitutional court challenge. The Liberal government says it won't appeal. Now that we are free to speak out the Coalition would like to tell you about the six issues on our Agenda For Canadians—ask your candidates about them.

1. Canadians want democracy in the workplace and the right to earn a living. In a free and democratic society citizens shouldn't be forced to join unions or pay union dues in order to earn a living. When they are, they often find themselves unwillingly supporting Canada's official socialist party, the NDP. Citizens who are forced to join unions often find themselves unemployed through strikes or when companies are forced to cut back because of high and uncompetitive labour costs. We commissioned a national Gallup Poll on the six issues of our Agenda For Canadians. The poll shows 69.9% of decided Canadians want the right to Earn A Living (E.A.L.), a close to one margin. Even among "labour" respondents, 61.9% wanted E.A.L. In the poll we also asked if unions were, small business relations, and the...
2. Nationally, of decided respondents, 57% approved while only 27% disapproved—a better than two to one margin. Shouldn't you know where your candidates stand on ending crown corporations? Find out before you vote.
3. Canadians want the Federal Government forced by law to balance the budget. Canada, blessed with abundant natural resources, is well on its way to becoming a national debtor. In the past ten years under the Liberal government we have started with their finance...
4. Nationally, of decided respondents, 61.9% of Canadians disapproved of fully indexed pensions for MPs while only 28.2% approved. Shouldn't you know where your candidates stand on fully indexed pensions? Find out before you vote.
5. Canadians want...

property rights entrenched in the constitution, and curbs on union powers.

David Somerville, NCC vice-president, says the Coalition is encouraged by the response it has had so far.

The NCC has found 84 candidates to support their stand against fully indexed pensions for MP's and Somerville claims the Conservative party is also endorsing that position. He said *The Globe and Mail* recently ran an editorial supporting the idea of selling-off some crown corporations and that even Liberal Senator Michael Pitfield has endorsed the idea of selling Petrocan.

Although the government of Joe Clark found the selling of Petrocan to be an unpopular stance among the electorate in 1980, Somerville says the public's perception of the issue

has changed.

"It's taken five years to do. We could take a lot of the credit for it."

The Conservatives had problems with the issue because it wasn't part of a "philosophical pedigree." "They had no reason for selling it," he said.

The NCC wants the crown corporation sold in order to help reduce the federal deficit.

Discussion of "balancing the budget is just under the surface," said Somerville. "They're starting to talk more clearly and honestly on the issue. I don't think these guys are taking any courageous stands on anything. If Turner was being honest with Canadians ... he knows we can't keep all these social programmes and reduce the deficit at the same time."

Somerville says the candidates are on the wrong track with job creation programmes.

"We're completely opposed to job

creation—in the long term it's going to cost us jobs. It's a sad joke to say the government can create jobs," he said.

"The only way to create jobs is to get government off the backs of the free enterprise system."

In the Halifax area politicians discount the impact of the NCC.

"I must admit we haven't seen too much of them," said Liberal candidate Ben Prossin (Halifax West). "They haven't had any impact here yet. We haven't felt any feedback from any voter on anything they said."

Prossin says the NCC's "Agenda for Canadians" is an unrealistic programme.

"It's derived from 19th century thinking. It's a flakey programme," he said. "Extremism in any variety—left or right—is unacceptable to mainstream Canadians."

Duncan Haslam, campaign manager for NDP candidate Dennis Theman (Halifax West) charges the NCC "is a cover for the Conservative Party in Canada."

Somerville denies any connection to any party and says the Coalition is no longer considered right wing.

"Ten years ago it was right wing," he said. "In the 60's and early 70's the pendulum swung left. The pendulum has come back to us."

Somerville says that even if Brian Mulroney's Conservatives get elected, the Canadian public can still expect to see the NCC's ads.

He points out that in Ontario the NCC has taken out two ads attacking the Conservative Davis government for its purchase of SUNCOR (Ontario's mini-Petrocan) and Davis' stand on the constitution.

"We won't be letting up on government," Somerville promises.