

CHAMPIONING THE OBVIOUS

An ex-City Editor for the Halifax Herald once told us the erudite broadsheet's chief distinction was that of being a "champion of the obvious." While all people, including the simpleminded need a patrician, such an approach does have conspicuous drawbacks. Worse, this practice of championing the self-evident afflicts more substantial parishes than the one on 1650 Argyle Street.

Check out public hero Brian Peckford sounding off about Newfoundland's rights to control its own resources and about the righteousness of his Newfoundlander-first hiring policy. Or look at the messianic, labour bashing Peter Lougheed unveiling his stupendous repartees to the liberal government's attacks on his right to institutionalized selfishness. Evidence, logic, ethics don't concern these kind of men. These aren't the highways which political mileage is made on.

Two Dalhousie professors recently urged us to print (in its entirety) a ten page diatribe by Memorial philosophy professor F.L. Jackson against Trudeau's constitutional proposals. This rather unphilosophical philosophy paper, which claims Trudeau's proposals will lead to the abolition of Newfoundland as a "distinctive political and cultural entity," represents one of our closer encounters with the movement to sacrifice reason for shallow-minded persuasion.

The Liberal's imposition of parliamentary closure on the constitutional debate on October 23 recently sparked one of the most melodramatic renditions of the obvious by Joe Clark and his outraged cronies. Suave Dartmouth-Halifax East PC Mike Forrestal was quoted as yelling out in the House of Commons: "You will destroy the country . . . knowingly and willingly. You're tearing us apart." Yukon PC Erik Neilson, with a superb sense for the symbolic, brandished a copy of Machiavelli's "The Prince" and accused the Liberals of "embarking on a new era of mind control." Joe Clark, as usual, blustered and sputtered. Finally, the Conservatives, those neglected guardians of the public weal, mournfully sung our national anthem to lament Trudeau's allegedly undemocratic ways.

Few major Canadian newspapers, all of whom with the exception of the Toronto Star went Conservative last federal election, picked up on the fact that this particular imposition of parliamentary closure wasn't the dictatorial act it was made out to be. First, it followed 11 days of constitutional debate in the House during which 14 Liberal and 13 Conservatives had made presentations which were already becoming repetitious. Second, the opposition had earlier declined an offer by the government to extend the periods of debate. Finally, this by no means ends the constitutional debate. From here the proposed Canada Act goes to be closely scrutinized by the Senate and then a 25 member joint Senate-House of Commons Committee for further examination.

Closure was nothing but a means of ending the first stage of debate on an issue in order to make way for other important parliamentary business—the long overdue budget, for instance.

We ought not be construed as advocating the rubber stamping of so paramount an act. What we are asking, undoubtedly in vain, is that people focus in on the proposed ending formula, the human rights to be entrenched and the act of patriation—the essence of the Act—and forget the rhetoric and red herrings.

While we are so clumsily trying to get our act together as a country, there are meat and potatoes issues like unemployment and inflation we need to be worrying about. Federal-provincial feuding continues to impede us in driving hard bargains with multinational corporations and foreign governments. The longer we grandstand about the constitution, the longer we will have to wait to see if the Liberals ever fulfill their promise to do something about the appalling level of American ownership of Canadian industry (over 50 percent in the petroleum, manufacturing and mining industries, for example). The obvious may be great to talk about, but it's not so hot to live with.

VOICES VOICES VOICES

The responsibility of the feminist movement is not only to present the issues but to point out where misconceptions occur and help to clear up those misconceptions. Its biggest job is not to get new rape laws enacted or equal wages but to change an attitude, a way of thinking that permeates our culture.

The Silhouette, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

The problem with the team seems to be a lack of a winning tradition. The Argo's don't know what it's like to win, so they don't. They are not helped in the least by a Toronto media that sings their praise at the beginning of each season only to turn viciously against the team as the season progresses. Media in other cities have traditionally dealt with the Argo as comedy. Allan Fotheringham once referred to the team as "Canada's longest running joke". Through all this the Toronto citizenry continues to flock to Exhibition Stadium.

William "Chip" McBain, Sports Editor, The Cord Weekly, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario.

I love bitching, I really do.

The Champlain Bugle, Champlain Regional College, St. Lambert, P.Q.



the Dalhousie Gazette

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