

Editorial

Robinson betrays party's problem

Burnaby M.P. Svend Robinson gave a good account of himself yesterday, but his speech served to point out just what is wrong with the NDP.

Robinson is a good speaker and it was a pity that just a handful of students came to see him. He made strong, eloquent statements in favour of the government's proposed Charter of Rights. His comments about the treatment of Japanese Canadians were especially moving.

Robinson is also to be applauded for his support of Franco-Ontarian rights. Unfortunately he has been temporarily deserted by his New Democratic colleagues. They may return after the Ontario election.

Mike Cassidy, the leader of the Ontario NDP, is fighting for his political life. Cassidy's solution to the problems he faces is to sweep under the carpet any NDP policies which may prove to be embarrassing during a campaign, underscoring the NDP's habitual and costly lack of ideological consensus.

During the 1977 campaign there were two debates on television. The opening contest pitted the provincial party leaders in an English debate. The second one was a French language debate. Its participants were Rene Brunelle for the Tories, Liberal Albert Roy, and Mike Cassidy on behalf of the NDP.

The second debate was superior

to the first contest. All three participants were knowledgeable about the issues and didn't need to resort to cliches as did their party leaders.

Roy and Cassidy both pressed Brunelle to make French an official language of Ontario. Roy and Cassidy making forceful presentations for their cause.

Four years later, Cassidy finds himself leading the NDP in a provincial campaign, and "Hopalong" Cassidy, as he has been dubbed by other MPP's at Queen's Park, has changed his priorities.

Cassidy is now urging the federal NDP caucus not to press for official language status for French in Ontario, perhaps because of the

possible anti-French backlash in Ontario, as Bill Davis has always maintained.

Cassidy is having similar fears with the gay rights issue. He claims that inclusion of homosexuals in the Human Rights Code is a NDP policy, but not a priority. In fact, it is quite low on the priority lists.

Of course, the NDP is not alone in this. Liberal leader Stuart Smith is equally culpable. In 1977, just after the election of PQ in Quebec, Smith set out on a Quixotic mission to keep Quebec in Confederation. To him it was of major importance to make French an official language in Ontario.

Smith, like Cassidy has changed his mind, at least for this campaign. Smith supports the sexual

orientation amendment to the Human Rights Code. But Smith will not bind his caucus to it, opting instead for a free vote. Incidentally, most Liberals are against it.

The Tories are consistent, if nothing else. They have steadfastly said no to official bilingualism and the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Human Rights Code.

The NDP often claim that they are the only party with principles, but Mike Cassidy is living proof that the NDP will dump policies when they become politically embarrassing. Will Cassidy desert the NDP education policies if they become a liability according to Goldfarb?

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