



A mass grave was used for 31 of the 43 victims of the New Year's eve fire in Chapais.

NEW YEAR'S EVE TRAGEDY

Chapais buries its fire victims

CHAPAIS, Que. (CP) — A large hole in the tiny cemetery outside this mining town became the common grave Sunday for 34 victims of a New Year's party tragedy.

In mid-afternoon a priest gave the last rites over the coffins in the 156-square-metre grave. Relatives were not invited to attend.

Two of the victims were buried in separate graves in the cemetery and the remaining eight were buried in the Lake St. John region, at Val d'Or and at Edmundston, N.B.

It was only a week ago that about 350 persons gathered in the town's recreation centre to celebrate the incoming New Year.

But tragedy struck when a fire took hold in tinder-dry decorative spruce boughs. Within a short time the centre was burned to the ground and 41 people were

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National

dead. Three people died later and 13 are still in hospital.

On Saturday about 2,000 mourners crowded into the local hockey arena to pay their last respects to the dead and try to comfort each other. Almost everyone in the town of 3,500 had lost a friend, a relative or both.

Quebec Premier Rene Levesque and other provincial and federal government representatives attended the funeral.

Levesque told reporters there was little that could

Bishop Drainville praised the residents of Chapais for pulling together to help the families of the victims. They had shown themselves to be "the biggest family I have ever seen," he said.

Rev. Pierre Guenette of Chapais told the mourners: "After this trial it will be the responsibility of each member of our community to bring joy to all our brothers."

"The pain afflicting us will last for many years, but we will find joy again."

A committee organizing a disaster fund for victims' families reported Saturday that \$53,000 had been contributed.

Chapais Mayor Gerard Pellerin, who suffered burns during the fire, told reporters the committee expects to raise \$100,000 to help with the survivors' financial problems.

'PM INEPT'

Clark entices Quebec

by Canadian Press
Prime Minister Clark offered \$200 million in special energy projects to Quebecers on Sunday and asked them to help provide the majority that eluded his Progressive Conservative government in the May 22 election.

While Clark campaigned for re-election on Feb. 18, New Democrat Leader Ed Broadbent told a nomination meeting in Sudbury, Ont., that Clark was the most inept prime minister since Mackenzie King.

He also said Clark was a fool for allowing increased natural gas exports to the United States at the same time he was warning Canadians of possible shortages of home heating oil.

Liberal Leader Pierre Trudeau made only one campaign appearance during the weekend, speaking Saturday at a nomination meeting in Cornwall, Ont. He said economic measures included in the Conservative budget last month would have ensured a recession in Canada.

The former prime minister spent the rest of the weekend in Ottawa. He is scheduled to study campaign proposals today that came out of a meeting of the Liberals' 40-member policy committee during the weekend. He resumes his campaign Tuesday in Hamilton.

After taking Saturday off, Clark flew to Quebec City with his wife Maureen McTeer and concentrated on energy issues in a speech at nearby St. Laurent. The \$200 million is to be spread over three years and would finance projects agreed to by the federal and provincial governments.

He said his party is the only one in Canada that can unite all Canadians in a renewed Confederation. He then flew to St. John's where he continues his campaign today.

Broadbent was the hardest-running of the leaders during the weekend. He campaigned in Toronto and Sudbury on Saturday, then travelled to Oshawa on Sunday where he was nominated in his home riding. Former party leader David Lewis spoke in support of Broadbent at the nomination meeting.

The NDP leader campaigns today in Vancouver.

THE ELECTION

Promises wanted by senior citizens

VANCOUVER (CP) — A senior citizens' group is asking for commitments for pension improvements from federal party leaders and candidates in the Feb. 18 election.

Senior Citizens for Action Now held the first in a series of meetings across Canada here Sunday.

Group spokesman Tom Alsbury, a former mayor of Vancouver, said that more than half of British Columbia's pensioners are living at or below the poverty line.

Alsbury said a single pensioner receives about \$369 a month and needs at least \$700 to live on.

He said SCAN wants indexed

pensions of ten per cent a year or the minimum inflation rate.

Joe Phelps, a former Saskatchewan MLA and cabinet minister, said that many people in public office feign sympathy for pensioners but do little to help them.

"Seniors' poverty should shame this country," Phelps said. "We want to ensure that no matter which party is elected, it gets the message."

Phelps' wife Eva demanded an explanation for the annual government pension which former Liberal cabinet minister Donald Macdonald receives.

Mrs. Phelps said Macdonald, 49, has retired from politics to a partnership in a prestigious law firm, corporate directorships and a \$13,000 government pension while 1.1 million Canadians are expected to live on \$3,200 a year.

She said there is no justice in indexed pensions giving Liberal leader Pierre Trudeau \$94,000 a year at age 70 and Prime Minister Clark and NDP leader Ed Broadbent more than \$100,000 at age 70 when so many senior citizens are virtually starving.

Federal plans made by Regan

AMHERST, N.S. (CP) — The Daily News says in today's edition that Nova Scotia Liberal leader and former premier Gerald Regan will announce Thursday his intention to contest the Halifax riding in the Feb. 18 federal election.

The newspaper quotes provincial Liberal caucus sources as saying the caucus would meet in Halifax hours before Regan is expected to announce his candidacy.

If Regan decides to run federally, he will resign his seat as member for Halifax-Needham and an interim leader will be named.

The sources said the most senior member of the Liberal caucus is Benoit Comeau, member of the legislature for Clare. If Comeau declines, Dr. William Gillis of Antigonish would be a likely caretaker leader.

Reports last week indicated the caucus was to meet on the weekend, but caucus leader Guy Brown said the meeting was scheduled for Thursday.

If Regan runs, his competitors will be incumbent Progressive Conservative George Cooper and New Democrat Alexa McDonough, both of whom have already been nominated.

Trudeau supporters deny rumors

OTTAWA (CP) — Deputy Liberal Leader Allan MacEachen says he did not withhold vital information from Pierre Trudeau last month as Trudeau considered whether to lead the party in the Feb. 18 election campaign.

Government House Leader Walter Baker and Robert Andras, a former Liberal cabinet minister, also denied roles attributed to them in a report of behind-the-scenes manoeuvring in the hours before the minority Progressive Conservative government was defeated Dec. 13.

The Toronto Star and the Ottawa Journal, in a syndicated column published Saturday, said MacEachen and Jim Coutts, Trudeau's chief aide, engineered Trudeau's return, preventing former finance minister Donald Macdonald from taking over as party leader.

A spokesman for Trudeau declined comment on the report, saying it was only speculation. Among other

things, the column said: —MacEachen and Coutts withheld vital information from the former prime minister, including the fact that one of the reasons given for staying on, difficulties in holding a mid-campaign leadership convention, was invalid.

—Coutts and MacEachen isolated Trudeau from Liberals who opposed the attempt to defeat the government, including Andras who the report said, "had tried and tried to urge Trudeau not to do it."

—Baker could have delayed the vote on the Conservative budget to allow External Affairs Minister Flora MacDonald time to return from Europe and to allow time for negotiations with the five Social Credit MPs who abstained.

MacEachen said Saturday that Trudeau was "fully informed about what happened in caucus and National Liberal Federation meetings." He said reports of plans by Liberal party insiders to

hold a cross-Canada leadership convention is "news to me. I have never heard of it before."

He said Trudeau had many sources of information during his deliberations, not just Coutts and himself.

Andras said he wanted to meet with Trudeau before the crucial vote but couldn't.

"I wanted to make sure of the consequences after the government's defeat . . . I even wanted to discuss with him the leadership issue."

But he didn't vote against the budget against his will. "It was a lousy budget," he said. "I would have voted against it anyway."

Andras, 58, was an MP for 14 years but has decided not to run again. He denied his retirement had anything to do with Trudeau's comeback.

"My relationship with Trudeau is great. He met me and my wife and we discussed my decision. He fully understands my personal reasons, which I've outlined in my statement."

Andras, MP for Thunder Bay-Nipigon, attended a Liberal policy meeting here this weekend.

Baker denied the report that he had underestimated the seriousness of the threat to the government. He said he knew early in the afternoon of Dec. 13 that the government could be defeated but did not postpone the budget vote because of principle.

The government lost the vote 139 to 133 with five Social Credit members abstaining and three Conservatives, including Miss MacDonald, absent.

"With the Creditistes abstaining we would have been defeated anyway," he said. "Besides, we felt the government, in order to carry on the nation's business, has to have the confidence of the House."

Baker also disputed the report that Speaker James Jerome had already made up his mind to cast his vote in favor of the government in case of a tie.

He said he doesn't think Jerome, a Liberal, would have voted for the government and said it was unfair to say Jerome would have advised anyone of his decision in advance.

Prime Minister Clark announced Friday the appointment of Jerome as associate chief justice of the Federal Court of Canada. Jerome had announced his intention not to run in the Feb. 18 election.

Debate threatened by Liberals

OTTAWA (CP) — The fate of a proposed nationally-televised election-campaign debate between the three major party leaders is up in the air because Liberals do not like the format the networks want to use.

Party officials met Friday for negotiations with officials representing the CBC, CTV and Global television networks over a proposed two-hour English-language debate on the evening of Feb. 10.

However, Liberals refused to grant final approval because the format of the debate would include three separate debates between Conservative Joe Clark, Liberal Pierre Trudeau and New Democrat Ed Broadbent plus questioning by three national reporters, one from each network.

The parties also are considering a similar debate on French-language television organized by Radio-Canada and TVA, a private network. The final format is not yet decided.

Liberal negotiator Gordon Ashworth said Trudeau and his strategy committee asked him to seek one of two alternative formats on grounds the three-reporter format interferes in true debate.

Ashworth said his alternatives included a series of four debates on four different days.

SALE DISCUSSED

Free Press owners meeting

TORONTO (CP) — The Sifton family, owners of a major share of FP Publications Ltd., meet today to discuss whether to sell their portion of the troubled newspaper chain, the family's lawyer said Sunday.

Richard Sheard of Winnipeg said members of the late John W. Sifton's family, who own 22.5 per cent of FP's voting shares, were to hold private meetings to discuss offers by two rival corporations, Thom-

son Newspapers Ltd. and Conrad Black, chairman of Argus Corp. and Vancouver-based Sterling Newspapers Ltd.

Thomson, publisher of 36 Canadian and 68 U.S. daily newspapers as well as The Times and Sunday Times of London, offered \$139 million for the chain on Wednesday.

The Thomson offer is about \$20 million higher than one made earlier by Black and his partners, George Gardiner,

president of the investment firm Gardiner Watson Ltd., and a corporation held in trust for the sons of John Bassett of Baton Broadcasting Inc. and Frederik Eaton of the T. Eaton Co.

Both offers expire Jan. 11.

If Thomson is successful in its bid, it would gain control of FP's eight dailies, including Toronto Globe and Mail, and increase its circulation by almost 50 per cent to 2.4 million.

Thomson has indicated it won't settle for less than major control of FP.

"What we want is for all of the FP shareholders to accept our offer, but we won't take less than voting control," John Tory, president of Woodbridge Co. Ltd, the holding company that controls Thomson, said earlier.

FP president George Currie has said Malone, 70, wants out and that the other principal shareholders were receptive to at least the Black offer.

TORY NOT SURE

'Are you kidding?'

MONTREAL (CP) — Although badly outnumbered, Marcel Prud'Homme gave as good as he got.

Prud'Homme, Liberal member of the last Parliament for St. Denis, was kidded this week when he accidentally walked into a crowd of Progressive Conservatives waiting to greet Prime Minister Clark.

"You should join our party," they taunted, "because at least we've got a permanent leader."

Prud'Homme rose to the occasion, however.

Spying Conservative Senator Martial Asselin in the crowd, the Liberal asked him if he had enough faith in Conservative chances to quit the Senate and run for the Commons.

Asselin, unaware that reporters were near, replied incredulously: "Are you crazy?"

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