

Do politicians, like cheese, grow sharper with age?

by CHARLES B. LYNCH, Southam News

OTTAWA — It's hard for a member of the Trudeau generation to write dispassionately on the question of old leaders versus young ones in politics, but there are some current facets of the matter that cry out for comment.

Until Ronald Reagan won the presidency of the United States, Pierre Trudeau was the oldest democratically elected leader in the world. He remains the most successful, in terms of retaining and regaining power.

The four largest countries in the world, in terms of landmass, are the Soviet Union, Canada, the United States and China, and all have governments headed by old geezers.

It must mean something, and yet here at home we keep hearing, from assorted political parties, about the merits of youthful leadership.

Not from our federal Liberals, certainly.

They have held onto power with a series of leaders who were in the golden years, starting with Mackenzie King, through Louis St. Laurent, Lester Pearson and Trudeau.

The federal Conservatives had their best kick at the power can with John Diefenbaker, who was in the twilight zone when he won power. They tried the old boy bit again with Robert Stanfield, but just when he was getting the hang of the thing he quit. Had he stayed he might have won power and remained prime minister into his 80s.

The Tories went the youth route with Joe Clark, but Old Man Trudeau got revitalized and Clark was beached at 40 years of age.

When you hear Liberals talk about who comes after Trudeau, the names they mention are Allan

MacEachen, who is 60, and John Turner, who is 52, or Donald Macdonald, who will be 50 his next birthday.

Obviously, the Liberals like their leaders ripe.

Let us turn to the Ontario political scene for a moment and contemplate how others parties approach the matter.

Stuart Smith has just put in his resignation as leader of the provincial Liberals, counting himself a political failure at age 43.

He follows provincial NDP leader Michael Cassidy into retirement, Cassidy having thrown in the towel at age 44.

A bunch of guys in their 30's are getting set to run for Smith's job, and the latest on the NDP sweepstakes is that Bobby Rae is getting set for a run.

Now, Bobby Rae is just past his

33rd birthday, and as member of parliament for Broadview-Greenwood in Toronto, he has made quite a splash in Ottawa.

The whole country took a bath on the strength of his 1979 motion that brought down the Conservative government of Joe Clark and opened the door for Pierre Trudeau's return to power.

Rae has been living with the fallout from that one ever since, along with the rest of us, but having thus had his name carved into the record books he feels the call of leadership, and the word is he can have the Ontario NDP job on a plate.

Why not? After all, Ed Schreyer was only 33 when he quit his Ottawa seat to lead the Manitoba New Democrats, and three weeks later he was elected premier, going on to become Governor-General.

Rae is smarter than Schreyer,

being a Rhodes scholar and all, and he is ever so much easier to listen to, being gifted with a sense of humor.

But Stuart Smith, who was 38 when the Ontario Liberals chose him as their leader, is a similar sort of man — bright as a button and as cerebral a person as you will find in politics anywhere, yet he couldn't get the voters to dig him. Smith's predecessor, Robert Nixon, was 39 when he became leader and 48 when he chucked it in, unable to convert his charm and intelligence into votes.

Which brings us to the success story of Angus MacLean, who became premier of Prince Edward Island at age 65. That's not old for The Island, the late Walter Shaw having been elected premier in 1963 at age 75. Shaw's favorite story was about a neighbor of his who was getting

married at age 92, and when somebody asked why a man of that age would want to get married, the reply was: "Doesn't want to. Has to!"

To become premier, Old Angus knocked off Bennett Campbell, who was 36 at the time, and it seemed that there were young bodies twitching all over the place.

Now, Angus is preparing to step down, full of years and full of honors, to live out his allotted span in dignity, to the turn of the century and beyond.

One Ontario Grit is quoted as saying that what the party needs is "a person who looks like a premier." Of Ontario, that is, which isn't the same as looking like a premier of anyplace else. I doubt that Bobby Rae will meet that test for at least another 30 years, and I nominate Stanley Knowles.

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Labor the goat?

With the federal government's fall budget only a few weeks away, Canadians are keenly aware the Trudeau-MacEachen duo must choose one of two paths in the quest for economic recovery.

The economy is in a sorry mess, the result of years of Liberal government neglect and aimless, half-hearted policy shuffles. Inflation has topped 13 per cent, the dollar is at its lowest ebb since the 1930s, interest rates are at record levels and the wheels of industry are slowing down.

Will the government — desperate because Canadians are finally aware of and concerned by the mounting economic chaos — decide to tackle the problems with resolve and proven economic policy?

Or will it look for a goat? According to Ottawa, government mishandling of the economy has nothing to do with the present state it's in. The Trudeau government has found it more palatable to blame everything from Reaganomics to postal strikes and Alberta oil-price demands for its woes.

Organized labor, fearing its turn as goat may be near, launched a pre-emptive attack Labor Day weekend to shoot down the spectre of wage and price controls before they can be launched.

Labor leaders can scarcely be faulted for their healthy apprehension; the 11-million-strong Canadian labor movement is a mighty big goat.

Although the government has soft-pedalled discussion of the issue, a Gallup Poll conducted in June revealed 54 per cent of the Canadian electorate already favored wage and price controls.

How much campaigning would

it take on the part of the Trudeau government to convince Canadians organized labor is the Big Bad Wolf?

Big labor has been in the news all year. We've weathered a postal strike and a forest industry shut-down, and grainhandlers are threatening to disrupt the movement of the prairie harvest to our customers abroad.

What damage has been done to the economy by wage settlements? While inflation is running at 13 per cent, wage settlements in the first six months of this year averaged slightly more than 12 per cent.

Clearly, wage settlements aren't at the root of the nation's economic troubles, and any attempt to saddle Canadian workers with wage and price controls would be unwarranted and another blatant example of a government intent on grabbing at any straw in a bid to at least appear to be doing something.

Canadians experienced wage and price controls from 1975 to 1978. When controls were instituted, the inflation rate was a record 10.6 per cent. It dropped to 6.2 per cent when controls were lifted in 1978.

Six months later, as workers scrambled to make up lost raises, the inflation rate soared to 9.8 per cent, a scant eight-tenths of a per cent less than the inflation rate of the pre-controls era.

Clearly, wage and price controls didn't work then and won't work now. It will take more than a brief fling with a flawed six-year-old idea to restore the economy to health and to convince Canadians to feel confidence in their government.

The plain truth

Adam Zimmerman, who is president of Noranda Mines and also has more than a passing acquaintance with Prince George as a vice-president of Northwood Pulp and Timber, is nothing if not honest to the point of bluntness.

One of the country's most successful businessmen, Mr. Zimmerman does not believe in pussyfooting around when enunciating his company's business practices as he did last week at a meeting in the Canadian Bar Association in Vancouver.

"The reason we're in business is to make a profit, and that's the only real, last reason we're in business," he told his audience. "We're not there for the good of anybody's health or for providing an academic environment for research and development or to experiment with high technology or to populate depressed areas."

In making remarks like that of course, Mr. Zimmerman is the first to recognize he risks being marked as an unthinking, uncaring personality, the hypothesis of bloated capitalism, which he said is not the case.

"One acts within the law and with public consent, but one has to make money," he said.

And making money for Noranda, as large a company as it may be, is as crucial to its survival as is making money for the corner grocery store. It is only by turning a profit that the two can survive, meet a payroll, dispense goods and services, put money into circulation and contribute to the wellbeing of the economy.

As much as the profit motive is derided today there would be no incentive for business and industry to grow and develop without it. Companies which don't plough their profits back into new plant and equipment are soon left behind by their competitors.

Mr. Zimmerman was merely stating a fact of life when he said his company must make money.

If it can't make money, it has no reason to exist. Nobody goes into business for any other reason and to pretend otherwise is to be hypocritical.

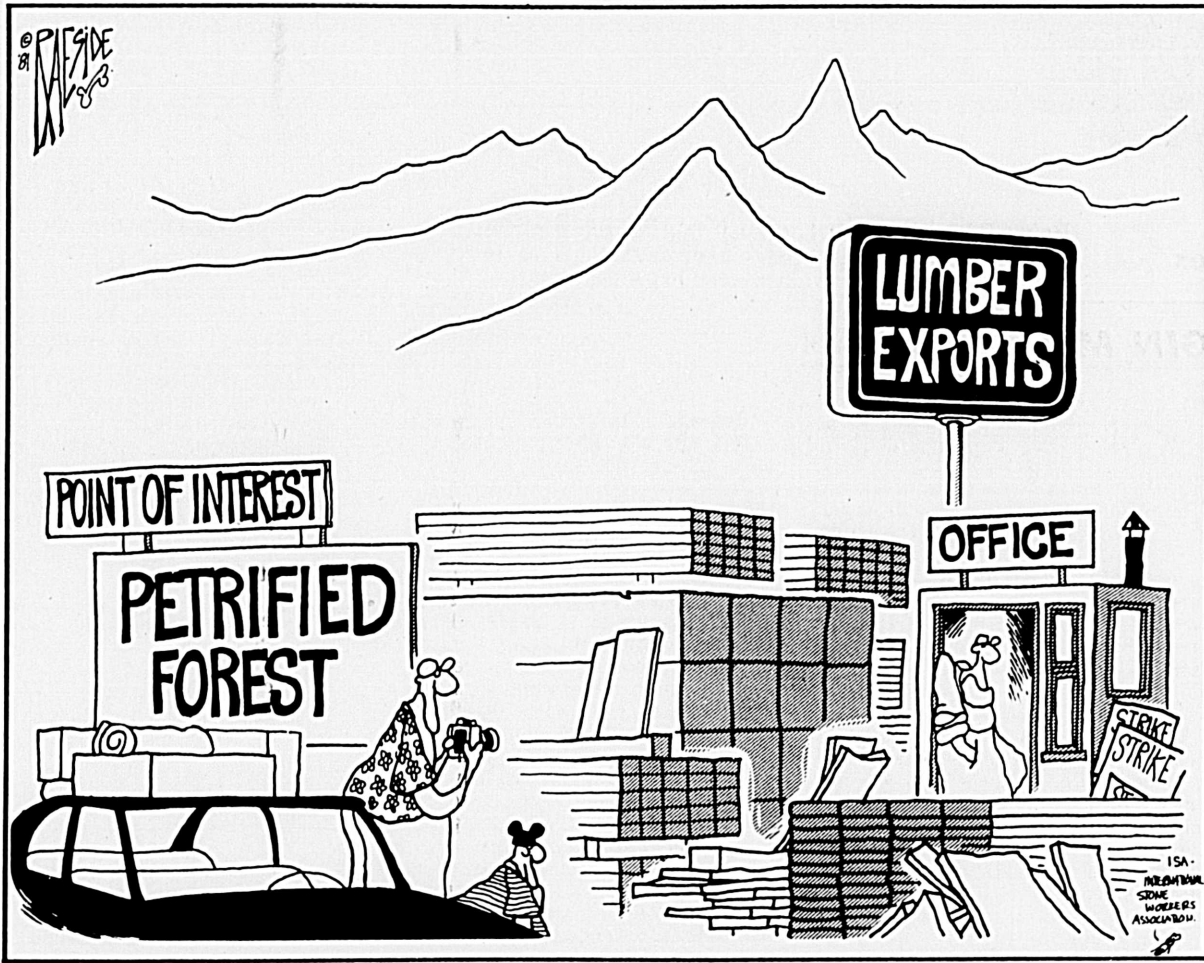
Maybe if more business leaders were as candid as Mr. Zimmerman there would be less public suspicion surrounding their activities.

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They should be no more than 300 words in length and may be edited for space and other reasons. Typed letters should be double spaced.



CANADA ADRIFT

Who's at the helm?

by ALLAN FOTHERINGHAM, Southam News

VANCOUVER — An observer easing back into the country at the end of summer after an extended trek abroad gets an impression of the place as a giant, well-fed whale that is adrift, rudderless — the brain missing.

There's a sense of: who's in charge here anyway?

There's a caretaker boss, soon to retire, who appears increasingly irritated at those who question his infallibility.

It's as if the Pope had to deal with voters. (The two of them might do well to switch places — both may indeed be in the wrong jobs.)

If one may be forgiven some comparisons, a jaunt around Europe is a reminder once again that no government can govern effectively, even in majority positions, if it does not enjoy the confidence of the grubby unwashed outside the gates.

That's clear in Britain at the moment, with the beleaguered Maggie Thatcher — clearly shaken by the urban riots — pressing on with her insane imitation of Reaganomics: the theory that the way to cure inflation is to squeeze those at the bottom of the heap and pretend that soaring unemployment does not create social unrest.

An affluent France, confident enough that it feels it can afford socialism, has signalled Francois Mitterand that he can press ahead with his reforms — including abolishing the guillotine.

A nervous West Germany, shocked out of its long smugness by a falling currency, starts to question the all-knowing leadership of the granitic Helmut Schmidt.

Spain and Portugal, both struggling manfully with unfamiliar democracy, are about to enter the Common Market as European equals. Italy, as always, despises government and somehow survives.

All that is semi-familiar — tired nations with exhausted or non-existent resources.

What is so striking on returning to this favored land is how its natural gifts are unmatched by those who presume to rule it.

The long drifting CBC and Post Office strikes — seemingly viewed by the government-in-charge as natural afflictions, like crab grass or black flies — have created a sense of a party-in-power that doesn't care, or know how to take command.

Mr. Trudeau, in the wake of the McDonald Commission and security chief John Starnes' assertion as to how much the cabinet knew and evaded, seems a man at the stretch of his formidable gifts for obfuscation and rhetorical evasiveness.

Probably the most fatuous comment by an intelligent man in recent memory is his argument that police chasing

a speeder must exceed the speed limit is somehow comparable to the RCMP breaking into offices of a legally established political party.

The prime minister's problem is that he is so intellectually superior to his opponents (in the press as well as elsewhere) that he becomes intellectually lazy and insults his adversaries with juvenile analogies.

There is a certain desperate flailing in a PM who at his first (i.e. pre-four-dollar-gas) press conference spends 20 minutes to answer the first anticipated question, smoke-screening with graphs, tables and cooked figures, still obstinately denying what we all know — that his gas costs more than Joe Clark gas.

The public has gone beyond him. They perceive that he is not capable of admitting even an understandable, forgivable error.

The only question one now gets is of two parts. Does he go late this year when the Supreme Court constitution decision vindicates him?

Or does he go because a Supreme Court "victory" (even a five-four split or six-three with all three Quebec justices opposing) would humiliate him?

Waiting for Trudeau is a long-running theatrical act and — in Western Canada — doggedly prepared for.

The wraith-like MacEachen, his caution obscuring his intellect, is not taken seriously any more.

The ludicrously promoted Jimmy Coutts boomlet has thankfully been laid to rest.

John Turner is viewed as furtively holding his fire too long; Don Macdonald the same to a lesser extent. De Gaulle's exile in his country retreat had a certain majesty to it. Bay Street directorships have not quite the same charm to the electorate.

It's a measure of the country that the two major aspirants to the political crown are both outside politics.

Canada, the most fortunate of nations, gives the distinct impression on Labor Day as being run on automatic pilot.

Bruce Levett

by Canadian Press

KITWANGA, B.C. (CP) — Here, in the rain forests of the Pacific, where the Cassiar Highway hits the western stretches of the Yellowhead, once stood a fort.

Historians are working to uncover its history and archaeology. And as they work, they are clearing away the mists surrounding a story that could have been told by Shakespeare.

The fort was built by a fierce Gitskan warrior named Nekt, but as government researchers dig deeper, the story goes back further than that.

Pieced together and presented by British Columbia and federal departments, it goes something like this:

Lutraisuh, daughter of a noble family, was kidnapped by a Haida war party, taken to the Queen Charlotte Islands, and forcibly wed to a blind chief named Bullhead.

Twice she bore him sons and each time, fearing they would grow to avenge their mother, Bullhead had them killed. A third son was born and Lutraisuh, to deceive her blind husband, tied back the boy's genitals with strands of her own hair.

It was a deception that could not last and Lutraisuh bargained with Bullhead's ambitious nephew for a knife and a canoe.

She cut off her husband's head and fled to the canoe with the chief's relatives in full cry.

As the story is presented: "Unable to paddle the canoe and

nurse her son at the same time, she cut off Bullhead's tongue and gave it to the boy as a pacifier."

The boy was Nekt. He became a fierce warrior, bent on revenge. He killed a grizzly, lined the hide with sheets of slate like a suit of armor and waged his war of vengeance from the hilltop stronghold.

His war club was called Strike-Only-Once. It was his Excalibur.

At first, his enemies thought he was a mythical bear that could not be killed.

"Eventually his identity was discovered and several families from Kitimat and the Nass entered into a plot to kill him," the research states.

They obtained the first gun to come into the Nass River area and shot Nekt as he was donning his armor.

There is little to be seen of the fort Nekt built — some depressions which once were house pits or wall ridges. Old totem poles, now falling and rotting, give a few clues to the story.

But there is hope that the tale will be kept alive.

As George MacDonald writes in *Conservation Canada*: "Perhaps the revival of Indian interest in their arts and traditions will cause new poles telling the story... to rise again along the banks of the Skeena."

"Young Gitskan in particular... will then be reminded of the days when Indian knights in armor besieged hill-top forts in the Canadian northwest."



Art Buchwald

I've been reading a lot of spy books this summer and they all seem to end the same way.

"Then, Mussoff, it is agreed. You will come to the United States and tell us everything you know about Vorinsky's circus in exchange for a new identity, and a house in McLean, Virginia."

"Yes, Savage. But one question. How did you know I was ready to come over to your side?"

"Maria told us."

"Maria of the PLO?"

"Maria really worked for Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service."

"But I thought her father was a Nazi criminal hiding in Argentina."

"That's what we wanted you to think. Maria's father was actually in charge of the St. Tropez History Section of the Library of Congress."

"Then that means he knew 'R' was working for us?"

"He actually didn't know it until 'R's' wife revealed it during her tryst with Dubois of the French Secret Service, whom we had been watching for some time."

"Is that why 'R' killed himself?"

"No, strangely enough 'R' killed himself when he ran out of cigarettes and couldn't find a shop that was open at 3 in the morning. Here comes your plane."

"Will I see you again, Savage?"

"Perhaps someday our paths may cross. Tell me, Mussoff. What was Karnofsky's connection with the Friedrichstrasse gang?"

"Karnofsky's mother and Friedrichstrasse were all part of the Bader Meinhof group. They hoped to get Ludorf out of jail by selling the West Germans a list of Parliament members who were on 'R's' payroll."

"Then it all fits into place. Ludorf knew this, and that is why he was blackmailing the burnt-out Karnofsky."

"You said it, Savage, I didn't. Well, I guess it's time to say goodbye."

"I'll walk you to the ramp."

"Tell me, Savage. What will you say to Maria?"

"I'll tell her you didn't mean to hit her when she wouldn't reveal why she had shot Vandenwalk at the Cafe Mozart in Copenhagen."

"Do you think she'll believe you?"

"It doesn't matter. Why is it so important to you?"

"Maria is carrying my child."

"I see. That explains the business with Zupel."

"Zupel was just a pawn we sacrificed after Appel was found re-handed with the coded message from Tarhouse."

"Well, here we are at the ramp. I guess this is it, Mussoff. Here is a package for you."

"What is it?"

"It's Bairidge's watch. We found it on his body after he was pushed in front of the Zurich to Munich express train."

"No wonder we couldn't locate it when we searched his luggage at the Helsinki airport. Thank you, Savage. I guess there is no more to say."

"You're so right, Mussoff. In our business the less said the better."

Ben Wicks



"If I loan you a million, I'll have to loan everyone a million."