

ATTEMPTING TO BEAT OLD PROBLEMS

Veteran Robert Bourassa back in political wars

MONTREAL (CP) — Robert Bourassa is officially back in politics after a seven-year hiatus, but the problems that haunted him during his last years as Quebec premier are bound to follow him into his campaign to regain leadership of the provincial Liberals.

The lanky, bespectacled economist and lawyer led the Quebec Liberals and served as premier in 1970-76, years marked by billion-dollar projects and massive job-creation drives as well as allegations of corruption aimed at his government.

Ironically, one those projects, the mammoth James Bay hydroelectric complex, was opened by the current Parti Quebecois government, which ousted Bourassa's Liberals in November, 1976.

Now, using the campaign slogan The Power of Experience, the former premier is making a comeback bid one pundit has likened to the one Richard Nixon made after losing the 1960 U.S. presidential election.

Two other Liberals, Pierre Paradis and Daniel Johnson Jr., a son of the late premier Daniel Johnson, are also seeking the leadership. A fourth, John Ciaccia, will reveal his intentions today.

Bourassa lost power on Nov. 15, 1976. Rene Levesque, the new premier, had stressed during the campaign that the Liberals suffered from a "generalized cancer of corruption."

But the PQ didn't make any specific charges and Bourassa spent the campaign challenging opponents to name "one case" of corruption. The PQ didn't, but voters had lost faith in Bourassa and any fears they had of separatism were assuaged by PQ promises to hold a referendum on its sovereignty-association option.

There were suggestions of conflict of interest in the Bourassa government's awarding of contracts worth \$1 million to Paragon Business Forms, partly owned by Bourassa's wife Andree and his brother-in-law Claude Simard, who sat in the Bourassa cabinet as tourism minister.

His government took over preparations for the 1976 Olympics in Montreal when it appeared the facilities would not be ready in time. Even so, construction of the main stadium and other sites cost \$1 billion more than projected.

An inquiry commission under Justice Albert Malouf of Quebec Superior Court subsequently found out that Olympic contractors had contributed \$778,000 to Liberal coffers. Contracts were awarded without bids.

William Obront, described in testimony before the Quebec police commission inquiry into organized crime as banker for the Montreal underworld, testified in 1973 that he gave Bourassa between \$4,500 and \$5,000 for his first leadership race.

Even so, when Bourassa declared his candidacy Monday, he was already rated the frontrunner among the three declared candidates. His organizers say he has the backing of 17 of the 46 Liberal members of the national assembly.

Surveys commissioned by Bourassa also suggest he is the most popular leadership candidate. However, the party establishment and the federal Liberals have largely lined up behind Johnson.

Bourassa turned 50 last month. He was first elected to the Quebec national assembly in the 1966 provincial election when the wily Daniel Johnson Sr. led the Union Nationale to victory even though the Liberals received more votes.

Bourassa was chosen leader in January, 1970, beating the late Claude Wagner, who lost the leadership of the Progressive Conservative party to Joe Clark six years later, and the late Pierre Laporte, killed by Front de Liberation du Quebec terrorists in October, 1970.

The Liberals returned to power on April 29, 1970, on Bourassa's promise to create 100,000 jobs in his first year, earning him the nickname of Bob Le Job. But that fall, just as his government was introducing medicare, the kidnappings of British diplomat James Cross and Laporte, then labor minister, plunged the province into the October Crisis.

Bourassa had consultations with Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau and Marc Lalonde, then principal secretary to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, after which Trudeau imposed the War Measures Act, leading to the arrests of hundreds of suspected FLQ sympathizers.

Many PQ members believe Bourassa and the federal Liberals tried to use the October Crisis to forge an association in voters' minds between the PQ and the FLQ.

Among the 450 arrested and jailed without charge was sometime poet Gerald Godin, who beat Bourassa in the Montreal riding of Mercier in the 1976 election and now is PQ minister of immigration and cultural communities.

During his first term, Bourassa vetoed the Victoria Charter, Trudeau's 1971 attempt to bring home the Constitution.

Also in 1971, he announced his "project of the century," the \$3.5-billion James Bay project, which grew into a \$16-billion project creating more electricity than Quebec needs. The PQ subsequently negotiated power sales to the United States at bargain prices.

On Oct. 30, 1973, Bourassa won the biggest electoral victory in Quebec history, taking 102 seats in the then 110-seat national assembly. During his second term, the assembly adopted the widely-criticized Bill 22, Quebec's first language law.

For the PQ and its supporters, Bill 22 was not tough enough. For English-speaking Quebecers, who traditionally back the Liberals, it was betrayal. On a visit to Quebec City, Trudeau attacked Bill 22 and derided Bourassa as "a little hot dog eater." It was eventually replaced by the PQ's much tougher Bill 101.

EROLA'S TASK TOUGH

More sought for consumers

OTTAWA (CP) — Some of the country's leading consumer advocates hope the appointment of Judy Erola as consumer and corporate affairs minister will result in more emphasis on the consumer, rather than the corporate, side of the portfolio.

The Consumer and Corporate Affairs Department was considered a prime force behind consumer advocacy in the 1970s. But more recently, consumer groups have complained the department listens more to corporations than their customers and has shunted off responsibility for consumer protection to provincial governments and under-funded consumer groups.

Moments after being sworn in last Friday as the new minister, replacing Andre Ouellet, Erola promised to give more attention to consumer issues.

But she could face an uphill struggle. Cabinet colleagues such as Finance Minister Marc Lalonde are actively courting the private sector as the economy is pulled out of recession and appear reluctant to antagonize business.

"I guess Judy Erola can prove that blondes are more fun," Geoff Scott, Progressive Conservative consumer affairs critic, said Monday in a telephone interview from his Dundas, Ont., home.

"I've been dealing with Ouellet the brunette for the last 3½ years and I hope Mrs. Erola will give consumers a higher profile than the previous minister, who really relegated it to about fourth on the totem pole."

Barbara Shand, president of the Consumers Association of Canada, said in an interview from Toronto that she hopes to convince Erola of the need to look more at the consumer impact of government policies.

Shand specifically cited textile and clothing import quotas, which force consumers to buy higher-priced domestic products.

Andrew Roman of the Toronto-based Public Interest Advocacy Centre said increased funding of consumer groups should be a top priority for Erola.

As well, Erola should become more involved in consumer-related issues that are normally handled by other departments.

For example, Erola should join Health Minister Monique Begin in defending consumer interests in the battle over hospital user fees and extra billing by doctors, Roman said.

"We need someone to do as much for consumers as Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan did for farmers."

Erola, who won high praise from the business community when she was mines minister, faces several controversial issues, many of them long-standing, in her new job.

The government has promised for years to bring in a competition bill because of perceived inadequacies with current anti-combines legislation.

But the apparent pro-business stance of the government and a vigorous business lobby could once again postpone introduction of that bill.

The "metric mess," as Scott calls it, is another part of Erola's inheritance.

Specifically, Erola will have to decide whether to lay charges against a group of Conservative MPs operating an imperial-measure gas station since January in contravention of the metric-only law.

Gregoire keeps job QUEBEC MEMBERS

MPs deny tax evasion

QUEBEC (CP) — Premier Rene Levesque says he will not call the Quebec national assembly into special session to force the resignation of Gilles Gregoire, the former Parti Quebecois back-bencher convicted June 17 on sexual immorality charges.

Levesque made the comment in a letter to Liberal member Hermann Mathieu, who complained two weeks ago that Gregoire's riding of Frontenac, which is adjacent to Mathieu's Beauce-Sud riding, was suffering because it didn't have an active assembly member.

A copy of Levesque's reply was made public Monday.

Gregoire has refused to resign, although he left the PQ caucus and is listed as an independent. He's now serving his sentence at Orsainville jail near Quebec City.

Mathieu had sought a special sitting to amend a which allows a member to retain his seat unless convicted of a criminal offence carrying a penalty of more than two years.

Gregoire was sentenced to two years less a day on seven charges of sexual immorality under the Juvenile Delinquents Act for sexual activities with minors.

OTTAWA (CP) — A handful of federal cabinet ministers and MPs from Quebec anxiously denied reports Monday they're dodging the province's income taxes, the highest in the country for upper income earners.

The Quebec Revenue Department says 20 Liberal politicians from the province are claiming Ottawa as their permanent home and paying lower Ontario taxes. Most of the 20 were not returning telephone calls Monday.

Letters were sent to them earlier this month warning that Quebec Finance Minister Jacques Parizeau plans to make public the names of federal politicians who did not file Quebec income tax returns for 1982. A copy of the letter, signed by department official Gabriel Cote, was obtained by the French-language Montreal daily La Presse.

Most MPs from all parts of the country maintain apartments in Ottawa, but keep permanent homes in their ridings, both for political reasons and so as not to disrupt their families. But the Quebec government says some MPs are claiming their apartments as permanent residences, a violation of tax laws.

A spokesman for Communications Minister Francis Fox said the minister rents an apartment in Ottawa, but his permanent home is north of Montreal. Fox has always paid Quebec income tax, including 1982, said assistant Jean-Francois Thibault.

Secretary of State Serge Joyal also rents an Ottawa apartment, but owns a home in Quebec City and pays Quebec taxes, his office said.

Labor Minister Andre Ouellet lives with his family in Ottawa and no longer has a home in his Papineau riding, his office said. It was not known where he mailed his tax return.

Government House Leader Yvon Pinard sold his Drummondville, Que., home when he became a cabinet minister in 1980 and then bought a home in Ottawa near the Rideau Canal. His office staff did not know where Pinard files his income tax returns.

Temiscamingue, said he might move to Ontario when he leaves politics. "There's less trouble there, and it costs less," he said.

Another back-bencher, Alexander Cyr, said he was an Ontario resident at the time of his first nomination and election in 1965 and has been ever since. The MP for Gaspé said he has absolutely nothing to do with the services provided by the Quebec government, and therefore sees no reason why he should pay taxes to Quebec City.

Parizeau's said in his letter he would give the MPs 90 days to provide explanations, after which the politicians would face penalties.

Among other Quebec politicians said to have received the letter is Fisheries Minister Pierre De Bane, who provided a home address in fashionable Rockcliffe to both the parliamentary guide and Canadian Who's Who.



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DENIES LOBBYING FOR JOB

Ostry upset at press allegations

OTTAWA (CP) — Bernard Ostry denies that he lobbied for the federal communications adviser job that enabled him to join his wife Sylvia in Paris in early 1980.

Ostry, then deputy federal communications minister and now deputy minister of trade and industry for Ontario, says he was asked by his minister, David MacDonald of the short-lived Progressive Conservative government, to go to Paris as special adviser on communications, technology and culture.

Ostry termed "false and . . . injurious to his reputation" a portion of a Canadian Press story last Thursday which said he had lobbied for the job and that Prime Minister Trudeau sent him to Paris after the re-election of a Liberal government.

The story was based on information from government and other sources gathered and written in early 1980.

David MacDonald is quoted as saying then that he had thought up the special Paris job for Ostry and "Bernie was quite keen on it."

Ostry says it was Liberal Communications Minister Francis Fox who followed through on the MacDonald idea.

Sylvia Ostry is returning to a temporary job in the prime minister's office, pending a permanent senior appointment, after three years as chief economist for the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development.

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