

Lewis on 'Cloud Nine'

he's now firm leader

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with tax 'bum' issue

★ From the time the federal election was called, *The Star's* Ottawa editor, Peter Desbarats, has crossed the country several times with the political leaders. Throughout his travels, he kept a notebook on the campaign. A series of excerpts from it continues today.

OCT. 18 OTTAWA

Wrote an analysis of the Gallup polls taken during the election campaigns since 1958 which would indicate a Liberal majority at the end of this one. This is the closest that I am going to come to a prediction. The older I get, the more suspicious I become of my own and other journalists' hunches about election.

Talked at lunch with a journalist from a Frankfurt newspaper who said that the campaign was much less apparent in Ottawa than the current German campaign was in most of their cities. Very few signs and banners in evidence here. Even during campaigns, this city seems to be isolated from the rest of the country, and to regard it with smug detachment.

OCT. 19. OTTAWA

Started to type excerpts from the September entries in my notebook. I was depressed by their triviality. The only thing that made it bearable was remembering the comment that someone had made after reading a portion of Harold Nicholson's fascinating journal of his years in the House of Commons in London: "But it's so dull—all about politics."

At mid-afternoon, I put it all away, took out my bicycle and pedalled for two hours along the banks of the Rideau. It was a perfect late autumn day, about 40 above and sunny, and the campaign had slipped back into some sort of perspective, temporarily, by the time I returned home.

The Toronto Star today came out for Stanfield a few hours after the Globe and Mail backed Trudeau.

My own thinking was that it would have been more consistent, and in harmony with The Star's traditional left-of-centre alignment, for the paper to have supported the New Democratic Party if it felt that it could not support the Liberals. As a columnist for The Star, I appreciated the publisher's decision to place his initials at the end of the editorial, contrary to usual custom.

OCT. 20. OTTAWA

In the upstairs room of the old house on Metcalfe St. where the national headquarters of the NDP is located, I talked with the party's national secretary, Cliff Scotton. He said that David Lewis is on "cloud nine" at this stage of a campaign that has been more successful than anyone had anticipated. It has confirmed his leadership of the party, probably through the next campaign.

Scotton was fairly optimistic about the NDP's chances in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, southern and northern Ontario and Toronto.

He took an unholy delight in discussing the inability of either major party to respond effectively to the "corporate welfare bum" slogan.

We also touched briefly on one of the campaign's recurring conversational themes: What would it be like if the Conservatives were being led by someone with more popular appeal?

OCT 22. VICTORIA

There were no rock bands to enliven the crowd at Oak Bay Junior High School. Just a middle-aged piano player at an old upright beside the stage, and Tommy Douglas telling the same jokes that he had used in Saskatchewan decades ago.

Douglas still talked in the old vocabulary above the party being a "crusade." Lewis, on the other hand, held out the "reasonable possibility" that the NDP will form the official opposition in Ottawa after this election—an unlikely forecast, but indicating the new level of existence for the party that underlies Lewis' own approach.

OCT. 23.

ABBOTSFORD

VICTORIA NEW WESTMINSTER

Up at 5.30 a.m. for the bus trip to the ferry. As the bus left the Empress Hotel in the darkness, I became aware of a Jewish mother's voice at the back of the bus, a voice from the Snowdon district in the Montreal of my childhood, a voice from the memories of Leonard Cohen and Irving Layton, "David, you've forgotten your briefcase?" It was Sophie Lewis, incongruous at this hour, in front of this hotel, in this campaign setting.

I thought of the wives of all the party leaders in this campaign, almost more different, one from the other, than their husbands are; and then I remembered the quip of Marion Pearson's that her husband cites in the first volume of his autobiography: "Behind every successful man there is a surprised woman."

On the ferry to the mainland, I talked with David Lewis about the frustrations of leading a party that is so weak in certain regions that it can't really transform an effective leader's campaign into a large number of seats. Nothing Lewis could have done in this campaign would



Peter Desbarats

have produced new seats in Alberta, Quebec or the Maritimes.

It was still early and foggy at New Westminster when a fleet of about two dozen fishing boats accompanied Lewis on a tour of the waterfront. I went along with Lewis' executive assistant and a reporter from Montreal's La Presse on the Sonja Leigh, owned by fisherman Harry Person. We learned a great deal about fishermen's problems from Harry but two rather trivial things stuck in my mind, as usual:

1. It's bad luck on a boat to open a can of condensed milk from the bottom.

2. As Harry said, discussing pollution: "We can always tell what the favorite color of toilet paper is by looking at the bottom of our nets. This year, it's pink."

The waterfront was a mess: Derelict and rotting wharves, raw sewage outfalls and oil and debris everywhere on the water.

OCT. 24. VANCOUVER

Visited the Vancouver Sun in the morning and discussed a public opinion poll that the paper has taken in the Vancouver area, for release at the end of the week. The preliminary conclusion was a drift away from the Liberals toward the NDP. The poll also showed that the "corporate bums" issue is the only one that appears to have stuck in the public's mind.

In the afternoon I caught up with C. M. Drury, president of the Treasury Board, now also in charge of National Defence, at a small neighborhood YMCA. Drury had just inspected the military base at Jericho Park with Liberal candidate Grant Deachman and two men from a citizens' committee that has been trying to persuade Ottawa to turn the base over to the city for a park.

For almost an hour we stood in the lobby of the YMCA, with a few young people listening in, and discussed a range of urban problems. Drury threw out the idea that perhaps cities should simply stop spending money on traffic improvement and put it all into public transit. Traffic in downtown areas eventually would become so bad that people would be forced to use the public system. In a few minutes, Drury had the citizens' committee people almost defending the status quo while his own real position remained undisclosed.

OCT. 25. VANCOUVER-VICTORIA

Stanfield press conference at 8.30 a.m. in the Hotel Vancouver. The Conservatives were feeding me scraps of information from their final national public opinion poll; other bits of data from this poll have been showing up in newspapers for the past day or so. It purports to show that a Liberal minority is inevitable. The only new thing I learned from a conversation with three of Stanfield's aides is that the polls showed Stanfield, for the first time, being rated as more competent than Trudeau to handle economic problems.

One of the radio broadcasters with the Stanfield campaign told me that Health Minister John Munro had telephoned him the previous day at three different campaign stops to complain about a commentary that Munro took to be pro-Stanfield. A sign of last-week-of-the-campaign jitters.

I took the float plane to Victoria at noon for a Trudeau rally in a local theatre. Since I last saw him 10 days ago, the Prime Minister has taken the theme of his campaign to its final stage: An affirmation of faith in the degree of national maturity achieved by Canadians.

The question is: How closely does Trudeau's image of Canada match the reality?

OCT. 26

VANCOUVER-EDMUNSTON, N.B.

We flew east in the Trudeau DC-9 during the daylight hours.

When we landed at Winnipeg to refuel at noon, I went forward as arranged to the Prime Minister's compartment. He was stretching his legs on the tarmac but returned in a few minutes and sat down at lunch.

We talked about the structure of his campaign, and I was able to compare some of my own assessments with his for the column next Saturday.

He seemed relaxed and optimistic about the outcome on Monday; but it is obvious that the responsibility for an adverse result will be his in the measure that a victory will also be very much his own creation.

In the evening, we arrived after 10 p.m. for a meeting in a crowded church hall in Edmundston. Then we checked into a motel where some of the press found themselves at a late-night supper of oysters and lobster with the Prime Minister and his wife and members of his entourage. When I arrived, Trudeau was enthusiastically opening oysters, holding the oysters in his left hand and levering them open with a knife in his right. Beyond me. I had to pin them on the table to get enough leverage.