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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Liberal Contest Could Be Close

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AS THE provincial leadership convention gets closer - it's called for September 26 - most people to whom I talk are wondering what's happening.

I'm told reliably that George MacKay, member for 4th Prince, is expected to say definitely this week if he is to be a candidate. If he does come, I get the impression there'll be an interesting competition. If he doesn't, I can't see anyone else offering a serious threat for the leadership to Alex Matheson who has been party leader since 1955.

That's the impression I have after talking to many people in all three counties in the last month or so. Nobody to whom I talked, wanted anyone else but Mr. MacKay as an alternative to Mr. Matheson. I should add, I think, that many of these people want to go along with Mr. Matheson.

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE to estimate what will happen for I talked with only a handful, in comparison to the 1,055 delegates who will be eligible to vote at a provincial convention. There are 211 polling districts and each is entitled to five delegates. But I think I got a fairly good cross-section opinion of how the province's Liberals are feeling.

There'll probably be a convention whether Mr. MacKay comes or not, and there could be keen competition, for political developments change quickly at times. My observation - and it's as accurate as I can make it - reflects opinion here at the present time.

Luncheon At Green Park

I HAD A few interesting chats with people from various parts of the province while I was on vacation the past two weeks. A combined business and pleasure trip took me to the Ellerslie - Bideford - Tyne Valley - Port Hill area among other places.

My daughters and two nephews who were with me suggested Green Park as a good place to relax for the noon break, and we enjoyed a picnic lunch in the fine park the department of industry and natural resources is developing there.

Luckily I bumped into Park Warden Oliver MacKay who at 74 can recall some of the interesting things that happened in that area many years ago. The park itself is on the old Jim Yeo property at Port Hill and that recalled a story I wrote a few months ago for a special edition, about the large-scale shipbuilding activities in that area many years ago.

PORT HILL, I was told earlier this year, was a thriving business community when such places as Summerside, Alberton and O'Leary were wooded areas, some of them supplying lumber for ships that were being built at three shipyards in the area.

So it was particularly interesting to meet a man who could give me some first hand knowledge. Mr. MacKay recalls the day when the last of the ships sailed proudly out of Richmond Bay for an overseas destination - that was 68 years ago - he was only six at the time - and, like all of her predecessors, she was loaded with P.E.I. grain, and ship and grain were sold at destination.

P.E.I. Exported Grain Then

IT'S STRANGE to think of the province selling grain when we're importing tens of thousands of bushels each year from the prairie provinces, but large quantities of Island oats were shipped out annually in other years. The old black oats - remember them? - were especially sought for horse feed. Many horse owners - and we had some dandy horses here in the past - believed that nothing but black oats were any good for a horse.

But I'm wandering far from Port Hill and my friend Oliver MacKay. He told me, during a most interesting chat, that there had been three shipyards in the area.

Captain William Richards had a yard near where the biological station is located at Bideford. Totten and William Ellis had a yard at Trout River and there was the Yeo shipyard at Richmond Bay. Richards built the last ship, Mr. MacKay told me.

THERE WERE big, three-masted ships, recalled Mr. MacKay who couldn't tell me just how big they were. But it was interesting to note that the three-masters took three months to make the Old Country with favorable sailing weather. In unfavorable weather, the time was much longer.

The old Jim Yeo house stands on the property on which Green Park is located, although it is not in the park itself, and Mr. MacKay pointed to a cupola at the top of the big house where "Jim Yeo used to watch his ships sail out of the harbor" in those days. Collingwood Yeo, Jim's son and, I was told, "the last of the Yeo family", is still living, although the old house itself is vacant.

Carpenters were working on a building that day that will provide dressing room space for bathers among other things. The electricity had just been hooked up the previous day and the new park was "looking up" as modern touches were being added.

The area is filled to capacity on Sundays and holidays I was told, and they also get a number of visitors on week days.

Old Neighbours Are Visited

I WANDERED around a bit in the holiday period and talked to a number of interesting people. I visited at Vernon River an old Rose Valley - Shamrock neighbour, Mrs. Hugh Gillis, who is bright as a button and looking just fine at 95, and this week I visited a Southport neighbour, Malcolm MacDonald who is 93 years old. But the "old" terminology doesn't seem to apply to those people who are so bright and interesting. They're both easy to talk to, with most of their faculties seemingly unimpaired by the passing years. Their hearing is good and their memory excellent. I only wished that I had had more time to spend with them.

A host of memories came crowding in as I talked to Mrs. Gillis as she reminded me of days of my youth in Rose Valley and the neighbors we had at the time. Most of them

have passed on through the years and I believe William MacIntosh must be the last of that generation remaining in the Valley.

Small Businesses Are Thriving

WE STOPPED at a little roadside shop one day for refreshments and I was amazed to find that the proprietor does a \$25,000 business annually in the 12 x 16-foot building. He carries mostly luxury goods, although he does have a few groceries, but I thought as we drove away how many larger shops would like to have that much business.

Some eighty miles from that area I talked to a couple of young men who are running a general store in a country spot and are steadily expanding. Seeking the reason, I found they are making old-fashioned courtesy and attention to business pay off. People from fairly large centers stop there regularly to shop on their way to and from the City.

Of course good business administration goes with the development but what interested me most was the noticeable expansion in an area where there's not even a village from which to draw regular customers.