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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Ottawa Liberals Want Matheson

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LIBERAL ACTIVITIES have been in the news for the past few months, because of the events leading up to Tuesday's leadership convention. Here's something that's going to put them back in the news spotlight again.

Alex Matheson is being pressed to offer as a Liberal candidate here in Queens by the National Liberal people at Ottawa. They want him enough to offer him a cabinet portfolio if the Liberals are victorious in the next federal election.

If you think that's startling, let me add I do too. Don't ask me how I know for I cannot tell you. But I do know you can bank on it. I've known it for some time, but I felt I couldn't release it before the leadership convention.

MR. MATHESON refused to confirm or deny the story yesterday when I discussed it with him in his office. He did say though, that he hates to think of leaving the provincial party now. He gave me two reasons. First there was the "splendid vote of confidence a wonderful convention gave me on Tuesday" and secondly the fact "I'm sure now the Liberal party has the spirit and the drive to win the next election here on the Island".

He sees the P.E.I. Liberal Association that staged the convention and looked after the details in "splendid fashion", and the spirit the more than 1,000 delegates from across the province showed here this week, as the two big reasons for that "firm conviction".

How Rival Candidates Felt

I THINK I should explain why I didn't reveal the information before. As I see it Mr. Matheson couldn't have dropped out of the leadership race once his right to it had been so definitely challenged. A man has to maintain his pride and his self-respect. Had he dropped out then, he would have been open to the charge he was afraid of being licked. The teenagers, I think, call it "chickening out". So he had to run.

That he is successful is now history. But had I told you a month or more ago - and I knew it before then - that the federal Liberals were after him with tempting offers, I felt it could have spoiled his chances at the convention and some others might think that the added prestige it might give him would work in his favor, and either would be unfair.

I THINK I should tell you that Mr Matheson did not expect Tuesday morning that he would win. He told me then in confidence but that night he gave me permission to put it on the record. On the other hand Watson MacNaught did expect to win. He told me about 2:30 Tuesday in the Coliseum as we shook hands that he thought it was all right. That night, after it was all over, he told me again. But, "I knew how it really was going, the minute I stood up to speak," he admitted frankly.

I don't mean that as a criticism of Watson. My old friend was telling me honestly, and frankly, what his trusted advisors had been telling him from various parts of the Province. Mr. Matheson's doubts of victory were based on the same type of information, from his most trusted advisors.

PERSONALLY I couldn't make up my mind what would happen until I had been talking to delegates from across the Island in the Coliseum for almost an hour. I had just decided that a Matheson trend was evident, when I met a group of key men from Kings and Queens. Half of them, I had been told, were against Matheson, but I felt the convention was going his way when I found all of them backing him strongly.

That was sometime before the nominations were begun. The applause told the story the rest of the way.

MacKay Is Sought For Prince

HERE'S SOMETHING else to chew on for the next few weeks. A group of Prince County Liberals want George MacKay to offer as a federal candidate in Prince County. The genial 4th Prince member couldn't give me an answer Wednesday when I asked him what he would do, but he did confirm that a group had tackled him in the Coliseum and pressed him to run.

I shouldn't try to guess what a man may do, but I got the feeling he is not much interested. The demands a federal member has to face are becoming increasingly more difficult. If Mr. MacKay decides against it, I cannot blame him.

Martin's Weight Battle Story

A CANADIAN Press story says Paul Martin arrived in Moncton Wednesday morning at 5 o'clock and started walking five miles to the City. The walking part I can believe, for he told me here Tuesday night that he is having weight trouble and walks to hold it down. But that 5 o'clock story is somebody's imagination. The earlybird flight leaves here at 6 am and arrives in Moncton about 7am. So it would be after seven when Mr. Martin was found walking to the city.

The former health minister was pudgy, I'm told, before I first got to know him in 1953, but he took off weight so successfully that he trimmed down to a pleasantly neat appearance. This is from memory but I think he took off something like 30 to 40 pounds and I do recall that his feat was commonly discussed on Parliament Hill at the time. He told me Tuesday night that he's put on 10 pounds recently, and he's back on the 'watch your weight' regime again.

Incidentally, Mr. Martin wasn't pleased with the plane service on the way from Ottawa. Watch Hansard for a blast when he discusses it in Commons at the first opportunity.