

Politics

by Jim-Beaux Lieyeh

Dateline: Nov. 11, 1999-5:00 Newfoundland Standard Time: We made it!! About 8.5 hours ago my day started with a ringing. I wasn't sure it was the phone or my head until my eyes focussed on the clock. 8:40AM and I'm already late. Why? Does the word "ferry" mean something to anyone? On this morning it meant North Sydney. About 850 km from my bed and sailing at 3:00PM. Miraculously, we were rolling out of Charlottetown by 9:30. We battled sleet, snow, and rain while I struggled with the glare. Aside from the cost of tolls and ferries, I count myself lucky not to have any "unforeseen expenses" creep up on me and dig into my entertainment money. So now I sit "relieved" ready to provide my own political slants to anyone who needs help in finding relief...

David Copperfield and Robert Chisholm Both...

Did a disappearing act of their own for very different reasons last week. Copperfield divorced super model Claudia Scheiffer

because he wasn't "seeing" enough of her due to their heavy scheduling (I guess Copperfield can make the Statue of Liberty disappear but he can't "see" all of his exwife on the Net!!). Chisholm decided to divorce the Nova Scotia Provincial NDP party he helped rebuild. Unlike Copperfield, he left to be able to spend more time with his family. Resigning for this purpose is certainly more comforting than some of the other exit options that have been taken by other political party leaders. Personally, I can't help but wonder if there wasn't something more to his departure. Being the betting man that I am, I'd be ready to lay down this weekend's entertainment money on the fact that his departure is probably due to some embarrassing indiscretion that would have gotten him thrown out anyway. But let us move away from idle speculation and look at what he leaves behind. The NDP had a chance at power in Nova Scotia with two elections in less than a year. They failed to capitalize on general discontent with the Provincial

Liberals and blew a lead in popularity to the now reigning Tories when it counted. Regardless, the NDP has become a force in Atlantic Canada since Alexa McDonough became leader. But even with her campaigning, with a majority of the Federal MP's from

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the area, they still could not pull the election out. This tells me that even though Maritimers are prepared to give socialists their vote (for the first time ever) they are not quite ready to hand over the keys to the vault... I mean the government just yet. And maybe it was this unpleasant vision of the future Chisholm saw that scared him away from a crown he knew he would never wear.

What Happens When...

You conquer the

middle. In Canadian politics, like squash, it means you probably win. I am reminded of this with the passing of one of the few Liberals left in Alberta. Former Alberta Provincial Liberal Laurence Decore died last week. I realize he is not a household name. Frankly, I had never heard of him (like most Alberta Liberals in general) until last week. His footnote in history will be to reaffirm a political

side of the spectrum. In Decore's case, he was miles ahead of present Alberta Premier Ralph Klein in the election runup to takeover Tory Don Getty's crown. Klein, a wily and streetwise politician in his own right, could read the writing on the wall. The journalist and former mayor of Calgary radically altered his strategy to position himself to the right of Decore and closer to the conservative heartbeat of Alberta. Decore won some 30 seats primarily around relatively liberal Edmonton (where he also served as Mayor) but got dusted by a hack whose partying habits, like most print journalists, were famous. So as Decore gets buried in the ground and history books let's hope he doesn't have to wait as long as the dinosaur fossils in Drumheller do before they both get discovered.

PEI Get Ready For...

A bout of inflation. Why?? In the last two weeks a few developments have occurred that will take more money out of your pocket than usual. What are they?? Two things. First came the Island regulatory bodies decision to raise the price of gas. For all those who drive it has just

become a whole lot more expensive to do so. They claim that the rising cost for gas led to this. While still retaining the Atlantic crown for cheapest gas, I would be surprised if that body had ever lowered the price of gas when the global market was choked by an OPEC glut (and the price fell dramatically). The second cause is the federal government's decision to raise the tax on tobacco. Their thinking is that the price effects consumption and the goal is of course to reduce smokers. What I see this as is another tax grab by both the provincial and the federal government. Sin taxes have always been a popular place for politicians to tax. What sucks now is that the government does not really need the money. Most are either close to or running an annual surplus. If this price increase translates into some sort of tax cut than I will not bring the subject up again. However, my instincts (while admittedly damaged) tell me that this won't be the case. I hope I am wrong but don't be surprised to see me mention somewhere in the near future that inflation is creeping up on the Island. At least you will know why. And knowing is always half the battle!!!

GONZO OUT