

Interview

Due to the high turnover rate in Canadian elections, very few legislators who were in office in 1978, when the Canadian Parliamentary Review was founded, are still in office today. To mark the 20th anniversary of the Review we have interviewed four long-time members. Sean Conway, first elected in 1975, is the Liberal member for Renfrew North in the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Lorne Nystrom, first elected in 1968, is the New Democratic Party member for Qu'Appelle in the House of Commons. Jacques Baril, first elected in 1976, is the Parti Québécois member of the Quebec National Assembly for Arthabaska. John Reynolds is the Reform Party member of Parliament for West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast. He was first elected to the House of Commons in 1972 as a Progressive Conservative and later represented West Vancouver-Howe Sound in the British Columbia Legislative Assembly. The interviews were conducted in February and March 1998 by Gary Levy. The interview with Jacques Baril was done in collaboration with Christian Comeau.

Why did you go into politics and what were some of your initial impressions of Parliament?

Sean Conway: I grew up in an atmosphere where active politics was part of the family tradition. My grandfather, Thomas Patrick Murray represented South Renfrew in the Ontario Legislative Assembly from 1929 to 1945. It was great fun making the rounds with him. I also worked on the campaign for our local member of Parliament, Len Hopkins. In 1975, while a graduate student at Queen's University, a family friend suggested I seek the Liberal nomination. The sitting member, a Conservative, had retired. The Government of William Davis was struggling. The nomination meeting was held in May but if it had been two months earlier, during final exams, I never would have been a candidate. But the timing

was right, and a few months later, I found myself in Toronto as an MLA. When you are 24 years old you do not give such matters as much thought as you would ten years later.

I was probably better prepared than most people my age as I had heard numerous stories from my grandfather. He was 95 years old by the time I was elected but he still regaled visitors with stories about Mitchell Hepburn, George Drew, Howard Ferguson and other famous members of the legislature. My first impression was very humbling. Every party had a number of very experienced and talented people. Bob Nixon was our leader, Robert Welch and Darcy McKeough were very impressive members of the government. The NDP had Donald C. MacDonald and James Renwick. One of my earliest recollections was listening to a speech by

Stephen Lewis of the NDP. He was a great orator and listening to him made me realize that I still had a long way to go before I could compare with any of these political heavyweights.

Jacques Baril: I went into politics for two reasons. I wanted to defend the agricultural class because I am a dairy farmer and was active in the *Union des producteurs agricoles*. In the early 1970s, there were tremendous problems in the agricultural sector. People were digging holes to bury their calves, eggs, milk and so on. The second reason is a simple one. I am a sovereigntist by conviction and I want Quebec to achieve sovereignty. I had no idea how the legislature worked, or could work. I learned on the job.

Lorne Nystrom: In the late 1960s I was president of the Youth Wing of

the NDP. I had always been interested in politics and planned to run for office some day. A federal election was called for June 1968. I was 21 years old at the time and Yorkton Melville was generally considered to be a Tory seat. I ran for the NDP nomination against three other candidates. We had a huge turnout at the nomination meeting mainly because Laurier Lapierre was our guest Speaker. He had recently been fired as host of the CBC programme *This Hour has Seven Days* and was the NDP candidate in a Montreal riding. I won the nomination on the 3rd ballot. The election was dominated by "Trudeaumania" and returned a Liberal majority government. But in my riding the vote split three ways and I won with 38% of the popular vote.

I did not have many preconceived ideas. I had only been to Ottawa once, in 1967 when I hitchhiked across Canada on my way to Expo 67. I stopped briefly in Ottawa to take a picture in front of the Peace Tower. My initial impression of

Parliament is that it was a large and rather slow moving institution. There was not much discussion or interest in ideas that were current among my generation. I found it a very conservative place and even found many in my own party to be more conservative and traditional than I had imagined.

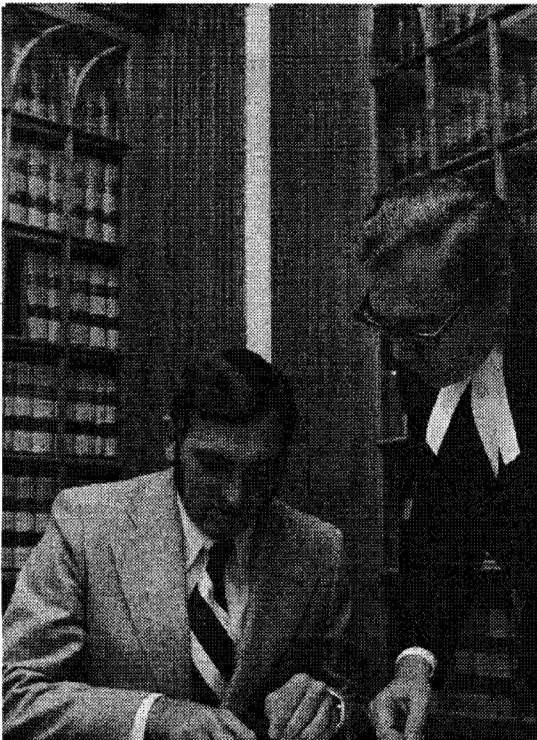
John Reynolds: In 1968, the Liberals under Pierre Trudeau were elected with quite a large mandate. However, their popularity among small businessmen, particularly in western Canada, did not last. In 1971, I was at a Christmas party and started talking politics with Tom Goode, the Liberal MP for Burnaby-Richmond. A number of us expressed concerns about the direction the government was taking and afterwards the question arose as to what we could do about it. One option is always to get involved. I was already a member of the Progressive Conservative Party and I decided to see what I could do to

help build up party membership for the next election.

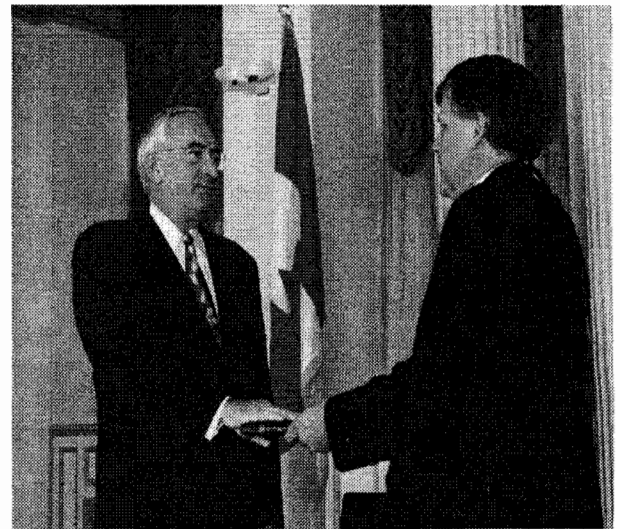
As nomination day drew closer, my name was mentioned more and more as a possible candidate. I was 29 years old and did not expect to win the nomination let alone the riding, however, I decided to let my name stand. At the very least I thought it would be great experience to learn how the democratic process really works. When the votes were counted in the 1972 election I won by a small margin, about 1,500 votes. As often happens in British Columbia, the vote split three ways and I came up the middle between the Liberals and the NDP. Two years later I was re-elected with the biggest majority in British Columbia.

In comparing the Chamber then and now, do you see any major differences? In question period for example.

John Reynolds: For one thing the Speaker seemed to have more



John Reynolds being sworn in by two Clerks of the House of Commons - Alistair Fraser (left) in 1972 and Robert Marleau in 1997.



authority in those days, at least as far as recognising members during question period was concerned. The parties gave him the names of the first 3 individuals they wanted recognised but after that he was on his own to recognise whoever he wanted.

Today it is more scripted by the parties although I do like the 35 seconds allowed for questions and answers as it allows more members to get their questions in. It seems to me that the Speaker got more respect in the early 1970s, perhaps because there was no television in those days. Whatever the reason, when the Speaker stood up and called for order you would have quiet within a few seconds.

The media has become much more important than it used to be. There were fewer scrums 30 years ago. Now all the parties have hired media people and they have tremendous influence over everything done in Ottawa. One thing that has not changed is the difficulty of getting western Canadian issues on the agenda. In the 1970s we used to have a meeting regarding question period every day. I remember that I could not convince my colleagues that we should be raising questions about a grain strike in western Canada. Not until the strike made the headlines in the *Globe and Mail* did we get it on the agenda. This has changed somewhat today with a western based party like Reform. But, we still have to fight with some of our party staff who are more oriented toward problems in central Canada.

Lorne Nystrom: Question period is definitely more rapid and faster moving today. There was no fixed time limit and you could have points of order or questions of privilege during question period. That is not allowed today.

I guess the biggest difference was that we did not have television in the House. It was introduced in 1977 and had an immediate effect on the way people dressed and behaved. I remember one MP, Bob Brisco, who liked to wear an ultra suede suit. He sat in the back benches and his suit was exactly the colour of the curtains in the House. When he rose to speak all you saw on TV was a round face peering out of the curtains. He never wore that suit again in the House. Behaviour also changed. There were night sessions in those days and it was not unknown for people to have too much to drink. Television discouraged such behaviour and eventually night sittings were eliminated completely.

Television also turned the House into more of a theatre and theatrical skills came in very handy. It also made Parliament more accessible and open to the people. On balance, I think television had a positive effect. There are only a handful of members in the House who remember what it was like before television.

Sean Conway: When I arrived at Queen's Park, there had been a Conservative Government in Ontario for 32 consecutive years. The political culture was that of single party dominance. The opposition, in their heart, never really imagined they would one day be the government. As a result question period was a set piece and lacked spontaneity. Today all parties have members who have been in office and that experience has led to great changes in the atmosphere of question period. The introduction of electronic Hansard has been a mixed blessing. It has led to increased grandstanding and members talking into the cameras rather than to their colleagues in the House.

Jacques Baril: There have been some small changes, but nothing major. When I first arrived, members were noisy about making their opinions known, thumping on the desk, banging the lid, and so forth. Nowadays, people show their support by applauding.



What about committee work then and now?

Lorne Nystrom: This has changed a bit but it is evolving slower than I would like. Committees do not exercise nearly enough power. It takes a determined chairman to really use the committee system to take on the government. George Baker did it in this Parliament with the Fisheries Committee and I think a lot of other committees could do more independent work if they wanted.

My experience on committees has been fairly positive. I particularly enjoyed working on various constitutional committees over the years. I thought they made a positive contribution to the advancement of public policy in this area, which has always been one of my main interests. It is not unusual anymore to see a committee on television but I think more could be done in this area and I wish the media would begin to pay more attention to committee work and less to the theatrics of question period.

In the present Parliament, with five parties represented on committees, it is a bit frustrating for me. The time for questioning is restricted and our party has only one member per committee which makes it difficult. Committees are also difficult for the government this Parliament. Their numbers are thin and they have to be careful not to get caught off guard in committee.



Lorne Nystrom with T.C. Douglas (left) and after his election to the House of Commons in 1997.



Sean Conway: Again we have to keep in mind the different political culture that prevails in Ontario. When I began, the select committee system was much more active. We had wide-ranging studies on company law, insurance, economic nationalism, and so on. It was not unusual for committees to travel to the United States or even overseas. We do not see such things today. In fact committees do not even get around Ontario very much.

Another difference is in the membership. I suspect the average member had ten years experience when I started. There was a great deal of institutional memory. Today a member with five years experience is considered a veteran. Institutional memory is almost non-existent among the members. Debates have become more polarized and nastier. This is true in both the Chamber and in committees.

John Reynolds: I do not think there has been much change in the way committees work. I was involved with a committee that pre-

pared an excellent report on the penitentiaries system. There are a few important committee studies underway in this Parliament. Generally speaking it was easier to get a committee going back in the 1970s and they operated in a much less partisan way. There has been no real progress in the independence of committees to undertake studies. The government still has too much to say about how they operate. Opposition members still have to fight too much to get their witnesses heard.

Jacques Baril: Yes, committees have changed. There was a major reform in 1989 when, in addition to their mandates of initiative and oversight of agencies, committees were given the power to summon the deputy minister and question him about his department. This was an important step, because it always used to be the minister who answered for his department. But now it is the deputy minister or CEO of a public body. This gives members more latitude.

The Standing Orders allow a committee to table its report to the Assembly, and when we make recommendations, there is provision for two hours of debate in the House. This is important because members do a lot of work in committee that the public knows nothing about. This is a little-known aspect of our jobs. Having worked with Denis Vaugeois in 1984, when the Standing Orders were reformed, I was somewhat familiar with them. When I became committee chair, I used the authority the Standing Orders gave us. But this does not always suit the government. When you make recommendations, it irritates the government. With respect to Bill 188 on market intermediaries, we made twelve recommendations based on what people told us at the public hearings. Our recommendations jog members' memories, and when the government introduces its bill six months or one year later, members remember what people came to tell them a year earlier.

There was also an important reform one year ago. A new commit-

tee, the Committee on Public Administration, which is similar to the public accounts committees in other provinces, was created. This was not how they did things in Quebec City. There was the Committee on the Budget and Administration, which mainly examined how departments were run. But now there is a committee, the sole purpose of which is to examine all financial commitments, and which works closely with the auditor general. I worked hard to create this committee because, while a committee chair must plan the work, legislation takes priority, and the chair is bound by that. You give priority to legislation, and put whatever other plans you had aside. The Committee on Public Administration, however, does not handle legislation. It can oversee and question the government on anything to do with administration. This committee is an important step forward, an important tool that members have acquired.



Have there been changes in the support provided to members?

Jacques Baril: When I arrived in 1976, there was a budget of \$11,000 for riding staff. It was ridiculous. On top of that, the newly elected member had to scramble for an office and to get a telephone installed, buy stationery and so on. He had to look after everything because there was no assistance. Today the National Assembly gives members an advance of \$2,000 or \$3,000 to at least buy a few things to get started.

We also have a budget to hire staff and we decide what the staff will be paid. We can have one or two riding offices depending on density of population and the size of the riding. I have a heavily populated rid-

ing not a large one and therefore am entitled to only one office. But huge ridings such as Duplessis are entitled to at least two riding offices.

When you are in opposition, you have a whole team of researchers and you receive a lot of technical support from the research office. When you are in power, you do not have this support. The thinking is that members do not need it because they have the support of the departments. But this is not always the case. We used to have a section in the National Assembly's library that, at one time, had ten or so researchers. I am told there are no more than two or three left. It is disgraceful. We used to ask these researchers to compile various things, do bits of research. I myself cannot start doing research. I can say what I want, but I do not have the time to do research. We have fewer services in that sense.

John Reynolds: Then as now the key to being a successful member is to have good staff in your Ottawa office and in the constituency. I have been fortunate in that when I returned to Ottawa after the 1997 election, I was able to get back some of the same people who worked for me in the 1970s. One of my constituency workers now is a former member of my Ottawa staff. I was one of the first members to open a constituency office back in the days when Parliament did not pay for such things. Now, of course that is covered under our allowances. The basic services a member is asked to provide to constituents has not changed very much but there is more demand on our time.

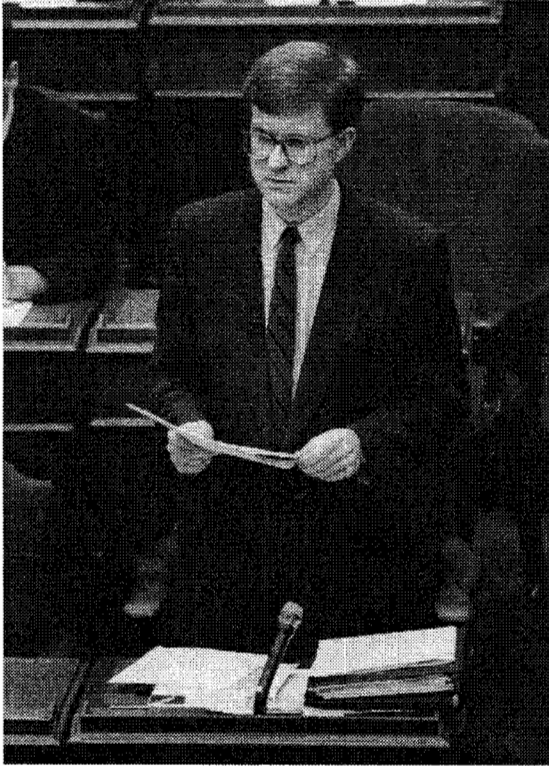
Sean Conway: I think our legislators have always been well supported both in terms of party/caucus support and services provided by the legislative library.

Sometimes I think we may have too many resources in that members seem to be happy to rely on clipping services rather than read the whole newspaper. More significant, I see members who think that they need one person to research their speech and another to write it. This leaves the MLA's role as little more than getting up to read a text they have never seen before. The quality of debate and speechmaking has declined due to an over reliance on staff.

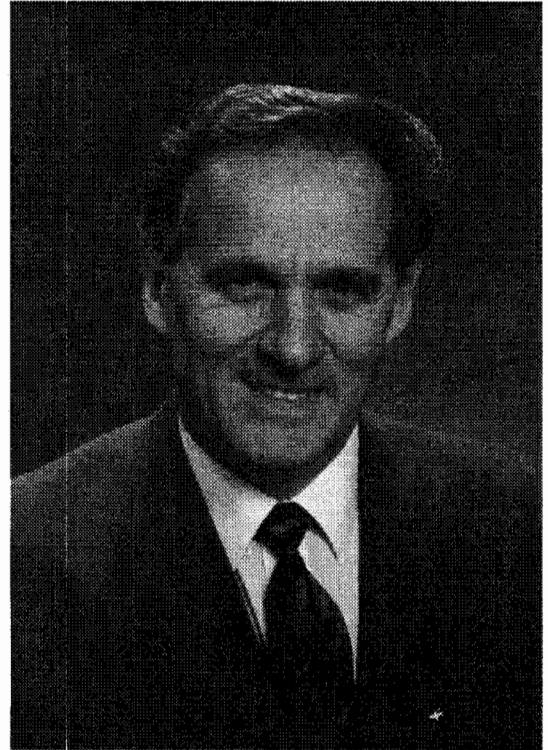
When I arrived we had no constituency offices but shortly thereafter they were established. I think we are well served now. Even with the best staff and resources in the world there is no substitute for the member getting out and meeting people. You have to do your own analysis of the situation.

Lorne Nystrom: There have been great changes in this respect. When I arrived in 1968, I had one secretary in Ottawa and no one in the constituency. There was a pool of office staff and eventually we were given funds to hire our own people. The way the budgets work now most members have 4 people. Originally most members had 3 in Ottawa and one in the riding but now it seems like 2 and 2 is the norm. Some hire an extra person but that means everyone has to earn less and even with only 4 staff the salaries are not high enough for the long hours many staffers have to put in.

Another change in resources has been at the caucus level. We now have much better central research and communications support provided centrally for the entire caucus. There have also been tremendous technological improvements. The one that made the biggest difference for me was the fax machine.



Sean Conway
(left) as a Minister
in the Peterson
Government.
Jacques Baril
(right) MNA for
Arthabaska.



What procedural or other reforms would you like to see?

Jacques Baril: First, there is the question of time which is used so unproductively in the House. I would like to see things move faster. But you run up against all sorts of procedures and process. You have to go with the flow in order to be able to implement your solutions with respect to budgets and programs. It takes time.

I do not have the solution. I have great respect for democracy but when you have 20 opposition members, and these twenty take ten or twenty minutes each to speak and three quarters of them are not even going to know what they are talking about, I find that a waste of time. I am sure there must be a way to respect the opposition parties, while preventing the government from doing whatever it wants. As to how a compromise can be achieved, I do not have the answer. For an old par-

liamentarian like myself, it becomes annoying.

John Reynolds: The most important thing for me would be more free votes. That is one of the policies that attracted me to the Reform Party. I do not think the role of legislators should be to rubber stamp the work of the bureaucracy. I think there is considerable support for this view among the Canadian people and it is one of the things that will help us eventually become the Government of Canada. I would also like to see Senate Reform and think the starting point would be the W.A.C. Bennett view of Canada as consisting of five regions all of which are unique. I think even the people of Quebec would recognise that this better represents the Canadian reality than either the present federation or two separate countries.

Lorne Nystrom: Two major changes have greatly weakened the

opposition during my years in Parliament. The first was the removal of the estimates from the House. This was done to make more time available by having estimates considered in committee, but if a committee does not consider and adopt the estimates by a certain date they are "deemed" to be approved. This removes a lot of incentive for serious scrutiny of government spending by members of Parliament.

The second change is the increased use of time allocation or closure to cut off debate. When I first came to Ottawa the infamous pipeline debate of 1956 was barely a decade old and governments were loath to be accused of cutting off opportunities for the opposition to debate a bill. Today, it is almost routine for a government to introduce time allocation.

I also think we have to do something to improve the ability of committees to undertake constructive public policy work and to make the government listen to their reports. I

think we need to have more free votes. We need to find a way to restrain the power of the Prime Minister's Office. I would favour a change in the way judges and heads of large public corporations are appointed. We could give the provinces a say in the appointment process as was proposed in the Meech Lake Accord or give parliamentarians a greater role.

I also think we have to look seriously at electoral reform. Several studies have come to the conclusion that we are not well served by the present first past the post system. In the last 50 years, only two elections have produced a government that had the support of more than 50% of the electorate. Many other countries have changed or are considering changing their electoral system. One of the most popular models is the German one which combines single member districts with members elected at large in proportion to the popular vote. I believe such a system would serve Canadians much better than our present electoral system.

Sean Conway: I am not sure if any procedural reforms can help us in Ontario at the present time. The legislature and the politics of the 1970s reflected a prosperous society where the income of the middle class was rising and the provincial economy growing. The angry, polarized politics of the 1990s reflects a population whose income and real standard of living has been declining. The result has been three consecutive electoral decapitations, each one more remarkable than its predecessor.

The result is rancor in the legislature the likes of which I have never seen. As members have become more strident they spend less time thinking about issues and more

time reading speeches to a Chamber of empty seats.



Who are some of the dominant personalities you have known in Parliament and what made them effective?

Lorne Nystrom: When I came to Parliament the three giants in our party were Tommy Douglas, David Lewis and Stanley Knowles. The Conservatives had John Diefenbaker and Robert Stanfield. The powers on the Liberal side were the Prime Minister, Mr. Pearson and Allan MacEachen. The Speaker of the House, Lucien Lamoureux, managed to be a dominant force from the Speaker's Chair.

Douglas, Lewis, MacEachen, Caouette and Diefenbaker were great orators and whether you agreed with them or not you wanted to hear them speak. Stanfield and Knowles had the ability to inspire trust. They were men of principle. Pierre Trudeau represented something new and different in politics. This novelty and his tremendous intellect made him a force to be reckoned with in the House or on the hustings.

Jacques Baril: René Lévesque was a remarkable individual. I have never met anyone more charismatic. He was fascinating. He could answer you nicely, but the opposition had better not push him past a certain point because, if they did, he could be scathing. He had respect for the National Assembly and for the opposition. He certainly respected the role of the opposition, which is what democracy is all about.

Mr. Lévesque also had a deep respect for his caucus. At the beginning of each meeting, he gave a

fifteen or twenty-minute speech. Each member took notes because it essentially outlined the political landscape for the following few weeks. He was great at summarizing the entire political situation in a few words, while clearly indicating his policies and where he was headed. He motivated people and kept the whole caucus united because we knew where he was headed. I do not mean to imply anything about others, but the approach is not the same. He listened to his troops and had a lot of respect for them.

In 1976, we had a team of well known individuals. I remember Jacques-Yvan Morin, Robert Burns, Claude Charron, Lise Payette and Jacques Parizeau. It was as though a new generation of politicians had arrived.

Sean Conway: I have already mentioned some of the people who impressed me when I first arrived. As to what makes a dominant personality, I am not sure. In many cases there seems to be a family connection. Bob Nixon and Stephen Lewis both had fathers who were famous politicians. Pat Reid came from a very political family. His brother John was a federal MP and cabinet minister. Other individuals seem to be purely intuitive. Ian Deans was a fireman by profession but had few peers as a parliamentarian. Albert Roy, now a judge, was another one who seemed to have great political intuition.

There were also a few of what I would call "characters." Eddie Sargent is one who comes to mind. Nominally a Liberal he was really an independent in word and deed. He was a populist, a local hero whose independence derived from success in sports and business. With this base of independence he could be outrageous or entertain-

ing. There have not been any like him in the legislature recently.

One reason characters could survive was that there were many safe seats in Ontario. A strong local individual could withstand a province-wide swing in the popular vote away from his party. Now there are no safe seats and as a result many who are elected get there because of the strength of the party. They think twice before rocking the boat.

John Reynolds: A number of individuals come to mind. Tommy Douglas, Réal Caouette, Don Jamieson, David Lewis and of course John Diefenbaker. They were all great orators. In those days you could speak for 45 minutes and when one of them had the floor you wanted to be there to listen. Pierre Trudeau could be quite impressive in question period.



What are the issues that stand out during your career?

Lorne Nystrom: The first issue that really caught my attention was the civil war in Nigeria. I was one of those Canadians who went to Biafra in 1969 to see first hand what was going on. We got caught in the cross fire and saw incredible scenes beyond the comprehension of most Canadians. Other memorable moments would include the invocation of the *War Measures Act* in 1970 and the sight of armed soldiers on Parliament Hill. The oil crisis of the mid 1970s and the Crows Nest Freight Rate debate are other issues that come to mind. The entire 1972-74 Parliament was very exciting. The NDP held the balance of power and can take credit for much of what was accomplished in those years.

The greatest issue was and continues to be the National Question. The two referenda in Quebec, the constitutional committees, repatriation of the constitution, the debate over "Les gens de l'air" and so many other issues related to national unity stand out in my mind. Our party has not always done well on these issues and our failure to develop an effective answer to the National Question has kept us out of office. I firmly believe that a majority or close to a majority of Canadians are sympathetic to the Social Democratic message but elections keep being decided on the National Question.

Jacques Baril: There were many issues. The legislation on political party funding was very important, as was that on the referendum. Car insurance, the French language, and agricultural zoning are a few areas that come to mind. This has been a time of reform. There was so much it was wonderful but a lot still remains to be done.

John Reynolds: The issues in the 1970s were not that different than they are today. We were debating the role of the Wheat Board, railway closures, illegal immigration, national unity and taxation. Even capital punishment, a very significant issue and one where I played a leading role for the Tories during my first term, is still an issue when we talk about crime or law and order issues.

The big difference is on the issue of national unity. We used to have some very strong Quebec nationalists like Réal Caouette and on the other side some pretty outspoken critics of bilingualism policies like Jack Horner of Alberta. But the debate was always under the assumption that Canada would remain a united country. Now we have a

large group in Parliament who are calling over and over for the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada. It gets a little frustrating for some of us to listen to that day after day.

Sean Conway: The economy is always the dominant issue in Ontario. Almost everything else can be related to the impact on the economy. For example there was a serious energy debate in the 1980s but the underlying issue was the potential impact on the economy. Even when the NDP was in office and they pushed the equity agenda, they did it in large part because they viewed that as being good for the economy of Ontario.

Other issues tend to be cyclical: municipal reform, educational reform even hospital closures were hotly debated in the 1970s and are still being debated today. National Unity can be an issue. I was part of a government that did not adequately understand that constitutional deals like the Meech Lake Accord have to, first and foremost, be acceptable to the people in your own province. We suffered greatly for our mistake in this area. Mike Harris, to his credit, seems to have learned from our mistakes.

Without a doubt, the most dramatic moment occurred in June 1985 when, after 42 years, the Conservative Government was defeated in the legislature and a new government took office. We all knew that theoretically in a democracy, a government does not stay in office forever. But things had become so stultified that many people could not envisage Ontario as anything but Tory. They called us the Albania of the free world. Then suddenly it changed. Ontario politics has been changing ever since.

Another dramatic moment was in 1997. For a period of several

weeks the legislature was besieged with angry demonstrators. There had been demonstrations before but I had never seen such anger against a government as we saw during that time.

A more pleasant moment was in late 1978, the night Stephen Lewis gave his final speech and walked out of the house for the last time. I remember that as he walked out he was accompanied by Bill Davis. That picture encapsulated for me the consensual nature of Ontario politics that used to exist. We had the leader of the socialist party and the leader of the centrist Conservative party able to maintain good personal relations although they debated and disagreed about the direction of Ontario politics.



Aside from being an MP or MLA, what other positions have you had during the last 20 years?

Lorne Nystrom: After 25 years in Parliament and at age 47, I found myself out of office after the 1993 election. Over the next four years I gradually built up a public affairs consulting business. Some of my major accounts included Crown Life and Alliance Pipeline. I did some work for aboriginal groups and served on one United Nations mission in South Africa. I also did a lot of public speaking on national unity issues, particularly on the Canadian Club circuit.

My life as a consultant was not all that different from that of an MP. I spent a lot of time travelling and talking about public policy issues. When it came time to decide whether to continue with this life or take a stab at returning to active politics I did not hesitate even though returning to the House meant a significant loss of income.

Like many in this profession I am addicted to Parliament.

I thought it was extremely important for the NDP to regain its status as an official party in the House of Commons. I am glad I was able to help to do this. I felt the right wing agenda being pushed to various degrees, by the Reform, the Conservatives and the Liberals had to be balanced by a stronger NDP presence. I am very happy to be back after my enforced sabbatical.

Jacques Baril: In 1985 I decided to leave politics. I did not see eye to eye with the new Parti Québécois leader, Pierre-Marc Johnson. I did not agree with the direction he was taking. With Pierre-Marc Johnson, it was no longer sovereignty, but "national affirmation". We were headed nowhere with national affirmation. What we need is sovereignty.

A second reason for leaving was my farm. I had been away for nine years and what I was earning as an MNA was not enough to keep it going. My son had finished agricultural college and was interested in taking it on, but it was in bad shape and unproductive. I also had two daughters whom I did not know well enough. So there were economic as well as family considerations. Also I was tired, worn out, and I wanted to leave before I started having family problems—I have always had quite a strong sense of family.

I had about four or five months of peace and then all sorts of organisations came after me with offers to sit on their board of directors. In the fall of 1987, I was approached to run for mayor in my municipality. I served in that capacity from 1987 until the 1989 election, when I returned to the National Assembly. I was never really out of politics, but at least I was home every evening

with my family. We also managed to rebuild the farm. I formed a company with my son and my wife. My son is the fifth generation to hold the farm. It is rather rare to see a farm stay in a family for five generations.

Why did I come back in 1989? I was happy at home, but there was pressure on me to return. I am a guy who has trouble saying no. As well, I had not given up on the idea of Quebec's independence. When I left, a Liberal MNA was elected. Not everyone was happy with him. I was even urged to run by Liberals in my riding because one thing they could be sure of was that I would be a better representative in opposition than the government MNA. I won by almost 5,000 votes.

John Reynolds: I had supported Claude Wagner for the Leadership of the PC Party in 1976. When he lost to Joe Clark I decided it was time for me to leave federal politics. I returned to British Columbia and a few years later ran for a seat in the provincial legislature.

I served for eight years from 1983 to 1991 including several years as Speaker and later as cabinet minister. I thoroughly enjoyed both jobs.

I was not a procedural expert but when I was asked to become Speaker I sat down with the Clerk and he gave me some good advice and some books to read on the subject. I also tried to model myself after the federal Speakers I had known, Lucien Lamoureux and James Jerome, both of whom had impeccable reputations for impartiality. I had very good relations with the House Leaders of the two major parties, Mark Rose of the NDP whom I had known in Ottawa and Garde Gardom of Social Credit. I also found, perhaps because of my physical size, that when I stood up in the chair I tended to get people's attention.

There is also a big plus in being Speaker as far as your constituents are concerned. If I needed something for my constituency, I could get to see the Minister immediately and usually get a favourable response since no one wants to antagonise the Speaker.

I moved on to the Cabinet at the request of the Leader because the Government was in trouble. I went down to defeat with the rest of the Government in the next election. I still think that if I had remained Speaker I would have been re-elected because my constituents appreciated the good job I was able to do for them.

The big attraction of being a Minister is that you are able to get things done. I had always been interested in environmental issues and when I was named Minister for that portfolio I had a chance to bring some of my ideas to fruition. The down side is that sometimes I had to take actions that hurt me politically. For example one of my biggest campaign contributors owned a pulp mill in my riding. This particular plant failed to meet our environmental guidelines and we had to order it closed. As Minister responsible I lost a good supporter.

Sean Conway: I have been in office continuously since 1975 but have held a number of different positions both in government and in opposition. Certainly being in opposition is more fun. You have more independence. However, it is very hard to be a good opposition member if you have never been in government. Once you have sat around the cabinet table you really understand how government works. You can tell when a minister is giving you the run around and when he or she is simply talking about the opportunities and restraints that go with governing.

There is a lot of pressure on ministers. I was 33 years old when I joined cabinet yet I was tired all the time. You have to learn time management. However, I do not think it is all that much more demanding than the role of a private member who is expected to participate in local activities and deal with constituent problems.



Have you participated in activities of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association or other parliamentary associations?

Lorne Nystrom: I have not been a major participant in CPA although I have found them useful when I did participate. I have also gone to a few AIPLF and Canada-France meetings. One only has so much time.

Sean Conway: In my early years I did, but not recently. I think these are useful for new members.

Jacques Baril: I have not participated a great deal in CPA activities because I am not fluent in English. I would like to participate but as long as I am unable to communicate with others the way I would like, I would prefer not to get involved.

I have, however, often taken part in the activities of the AIPLF and built up friendships with various parliamentarians, which was great. It is very interesting talking to members from other countries. The last such meeting I attended was in Brussels.

John Reynolds: I participated in numerous CPA activities both as a private member and during my term as Speaker of the BC Legislature. At the international level I think participation in the Association helps us to overcome our own

regionalism. I think the dominant feeling of everyone who goes on an international delegation, no matter how interesting it may be, is that it is great to get back to Canada. When we go to some of the developing countries we are able to put our own problems in perspective. I think we also have a responsibility, as Canadians, to help countries that seek our advice about how to establish democratic forms of government. While our system is far from perfect, it is still looked upon with envy by many countries in the rest of the world.

The CPA also operates on the regional level and it brings Canadian legislators together and increases their understanding about the legislative process. The Reform Party has, from the beginning, been reluctant to participate in these interparliamentary activities which are viewed largely as junkets and a waste of public money. My feeling is that we should take a closer look at some of these activities and not write them all off automatically.



Would you recommend a career in politics to someone thinking about running for office?

Jacques Baril: If you want to go into politics, you have to like people. If you are just doing it for the glory, don't bother. You will get hurt and you will be bored. You also have to be willing to make yourself available. It has to be a family decision, and your partner's support is essential. It is not always smooth sailing in politics. Even if you have all sorts of friends, when things take a turn for the worse, you often find yourself alone with just your wife and children. That is hard. You have to be thick-skinned and strong enough to rise above adversity. So,

you must have goals. You must have beliefs and be able to defend them. Every time there is an election, I stop and ask myself whether I want to run. Am I still interested, do I have goals I want to achieve? Am I sure I am not sick of it all?

What is most gratifying is people's appreciation. I feel I have really succeeded in doing a lot for my riding. I have worked hard to help the less fortunate, the average person. What motivates me is knowing that there are people who have no way of defending themselves.

John Reynolds: Generally I have made many more friends than enemies in politics. When I ran for the Leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party I found myself with a rather large debt. My wife suggested we hold a "Roast" to help pay off the debt. We managed to get high profile politicians from all parties to attend. Even Jean Chrétien,

who was then in private practice in Toronto, agreed to participate. It turned into one of the largest political dinners ever held in British Columbia up to that time, with something like 1400 guests. Friendships made in politics tend to be long lasting and cut across party lines.

Sean Conway: I am less likely to encourage people to enter politics today than I would have been ten years ago. There is less room for moderates in Ontario now. We seem to be infected with some of the worse aspects of US politics. Money is always a problem in politics but even worse is the proliferation of lobbyists and the attitude that if you want to do business with government you have to hire someone to lobby for you.

On the positive side there is great satisfaction in working for constituents. The Ottawa Valley is a very

special place still rooted in old fashion politics. I enjoy it.

There is still some scope for debate and disagreement over the role of government, the appropriate nature of federalism, public funded education and the role of Canada in the world. Needless to say, I hope we see a return to more moderate politics in Ontario after the next election.

Lorne Nystrom: I see three major reasons for going into political life. First it offers an opportunity to participate, even in a small way, in the elaboration of public policy. Secondly to help my constituents particularly when they are having problems dealing with the government bureaucracy. Finally I guess I still see politics as the best way to make our country a better and more progressive place to live.