

Politics

by Jim-Beau Lloyeah

IT IS NOW 3:23AM. THIS WAS WRITTEN LESS THAN ONE HOUR AGO...

Sept. 29th, 2:00AM. It is a clear, cool night at 1418 Pine Avenue, near the corner of Cedar Avenue, in Montreal, Quebec. I am sitting on the steps of the "Redpath Crescent" stairway about equal height to the second story of the home of the Right Honorable Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

I heard of his passing on the 401, just east of the Quebec border, compliments of CHOM FM radio. The first thought I had, aside from my profound sense of loss, was how appropriate it was to hear of this news here. Central Canada (Quebec and Ontario) accounted for most of the electoral support Trudeau needed for victories in 1968, 1972, 1974, and 1980.

But then I started thinking of his legacy. So in my opinion, as I pay my own personal homage to PET in front of his home, here we go on "welcome" paper table sheet, compliments of Mister Falafel (home of a kick ass Shish Taouk).

Trudeau was a visionary. He also accomplished noble goals that he set which must be appreciated in these times. He saw a bilingual country, which he tried to maintain and build in one way by

maintaining a bilingual public service.

In one fellow swoop, he extended the countries linguistic tentacles into every community it maintained a presence in. That is no small feat in a country as big as ours and helped to produce a valuable national thread. Many argue against the merits of this slant. That is there right. To me, how can knowing another language do anything but help a person become better?

And this leads well into Trudeau's own personal philosophy every man should be the best he can be with their potential. He therefore believed in the right of the individual over the rights of the collective. His clashes with Quebec Premier Rene Levesque and the Parti Quebecois had this at its fundamental root. The individual can only enjoy freedom to the extent that it does not harm another. This, to me, is a better deal than the majority having a right to infringe on a minority rights in the name of the collective.

As Justice minister he, "kept the state out of the country's bedroom." This media circus that I am witnessing right now, outside his house, complete with generators noisily running and reporters idly chatting, proves that he never enjoyed the privacy he sought for Canadians. That is a tragedy.

Trudeau was a tough man. He sent the army into Quebec in 1970 under the War

Measures Act, in reaction to the kidnapping of a Provincial Liberal Cabinet Minister Pierre Laporte and a British Trade Counsel named James Cross by members of the Federation Liberation de Quebec (FLQ).

This act, coupled with Laporte's murder, nailed shut the hopes of 60's idealism for Canadians.

When the Pequistes almost rioted on him in the early 70's, during a St. Jean de Baptists parade in Montreal, he stood his ground, while others cowered.

When abused in the West, he saluted his detractors with "The finger."

When he translated that in Parliament, he got scolded even though he was trying to pass it off as "fuddle duddle."

All these slips made Trudeau more human yet reinforced his strength. Strength of will is what is needed to run a country. And in the end, it was that strength of will that brought home a Constitution and a Charter of Rights in 1982, after only 115 years and innumerable embarrassing attempts at trying to get it.

The majority of provinces ganged up against him but he went his own way. When trying to unilaterally act, the Supreme Court was brought in but with a helping hand from his Justice Minister at the time, Jean Chretien (and Saskatchewan Attorney General Roy Romanow and Ontario Ray McMurty... aka The Kitchen Cabinet), he brought all but Quebec on board the Constitutional train. This is his most important achievement that will stretch out for the remainder of the time of this great country.

After that, things went down hill for him in politics. His

National Energy Program, that would have spread more of the vast energy resources of the country around, was bitterly opposed and eventually canned.

His last crusade was riding the world of nuclear arms, which he had little success in doing thanks to him once again being, like Panasonic, a little ahead of his time. It required more time than he would have to give to such an honorable crusade.

When he left, the country's national debt had soared well into the \$200 plus billion (from nothing when he had come in) but had given us PET Ripping Off Canada (PETRO Canada). He governed during tough economic times.

The 1973 OPEC Fuel Crisis, the post war economic hangover of over 30 years of economic growth, double digit inflation/ unemployment (which equal stagflation- which is an economic term developed for the unique, unenviable conditions), and a rapidly expanding civil service and welfare state.

But his forte was not numbers but a vision of a bilingual country whose citizens enjoyed individual human rights, that shared its wealth, led by a strong central government.

I am cold right now and running out of paper and power. I stare at the home in the heart of Montreal and wonder what Trudeau would have thought of me. Probably, "dam fool, go somewhere warm and leave me alone."

And I will because his life work has earned my respect and gratitude. Both push me to be the best Canadian I can offer to this country he thwarted into global respectability and envy...

GONZO Out at 3:01AM



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