The Author

RENEGADE IN POWER:
The Diefenbaker Years
By PETER C. NEWMAN

The Subject

INSTALMENT 2: THE 1957 ELECTION

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INSTALMENT 2: THE 1957 ELECTION

Decisive shifts in a nation's political history are seldom discernible from their undramatic beginnings. Moods and ideas change, men begin to question accepted beliefs, and finally the shifting political climate finds expression in a strong new leader who, almost intuitively, manages to gauge the nameless but profound discontent stirring in the land. Having correctly interpreted and articulated the nation's mood, he becomes irresistible.

This was the situation in the spring of 1957, as Canada prepared for its twenty-third general election. Most Canadians in the higher income brackets had become sated with the easy materialism of the lush 'fifties, and found themselves groping for some deeper personal and national purposes. Many citizens at the lower end of the economic scale were frustrated at not having gained a fair portion of the nation's abundance.

John Diefenbaker successfully drew upon both these moods to create a shared vision of a more noble future for his countrymen. Audiences at political meetings across the country, once described by the dean of Canadian newspapermen, Bruce Hutchinson, as "a collection of dull, skeptical haddock eyes to daunt the boldest politician." suddenly woke up.

It wasn't so much what Diefenbaker was saying, as how he was saying it. In the fabric of their promises, there was little significant difference between the Liberal and Conservative platforms. Bnt while Louis St. Laurent read his speeches like legal briefs that he had never seen before, John Diefenbaker pummelled his audience with highly evocative pledges of momentous (and impending) action on their behalf. The contrast was only accentuated by St. Laurent's attempts to poke fun at his opponent. "An election promise, after all," he patiently explained to his dwindling audiences, "is a mere cream-puff of a thing, with more air than substance in it."

Although Diefenbaker made a great many specific promises during his cross-country electioneering junkets, his platform did not add up to co-ordinated plans for the grand design he was touting for Canada. Its strongest and most precise planks dealt with parliamentary reform. He pledged himself to appoint a "permanent" Speaker, to abolish closure, to revitalize parliamentary committees, and to call a dominion-provincial conference on Senate reform. Other promises concerned the establishment of closer trading connections with the United Kingdom to reduce dependence on the United States, a Bill of Rights, and a vigorous new national agricultural policy to achieve some degree of price and income stability in that depressed industry.

Diefenbaker spent thirty-nine days on the campaign trail—compared with St. Laurent's twenty-eight. He covered a distance of 20,845 miles by rail, plane, and car, and delivered 103 speeches to audiences totalling more than 50,000 in 180 of the country's 265 ridings.

CAMPAIGN TURNING POINT AT VANCOUVER

The turning-point of his campaign probably came in Vancouver, on May 24. As he entered the Georgia Street Auditorium there, a surging, roaring crowd of three thousand gave him the largest and loudest ovation of his political career. Another two thousand supporters milled around nearby, sitting on curbs, car fenders, and tree branches, listening over outdoor loudspeakers. After the first cheers had died down, Diefenbaker looked at his audience and, in the awed tones of a prophet evoking a miracle, declared: "I think tonight across Canada something is happening, I think the Liberal Party is now realizing Canada is aroused as it has not been aroused in many years." Although his speech broke no new ground, he was interrupted forty-one times by applause and appreciative laughter. "It is a deep inspiration for me to see this vast audience," he concluded. "This is the kind of thing that gives me the strength to continue to work on behalf of the average men and women of this country. From the bottom of my heart I thank you. I won't let you down."

After Vancouver, his audiences grew in both number and enthusiasm. At Hanover, Ontario, a small Bruce County town in the heart of Liberal Finance Minister Walter Harris' riding, a crowd of 2,100 heard Diefenbaker's warning that a vote against him was, in effect, a vote against democracy. "If you send this Government back to office," he threatened, "don't ask Her Majesty's loyal Opposition to stand up for your rights. For you no longer will have any rights."

As Difenbaker's appeal was gathering momentum across the nation, the Liberal campaign was falling apart. Although the National Liberal Federation had invested an unprecedented $4 million in the 1957 election (nearly three times as much as the Conservatives) its efforts seemed to lack even the semblance of an imaginative strategy. The Liberals had been so confident of victory that they went into the election without filling the sixteen existing vacancies in the Senate.

As late as June 8, the Conservatives appeared to have no prospect of forming a government. The final forecast issued by the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion showed a 43.3 per cent to 37.5 per cent margin for the Liberals in the popular vote.

TREND ESTABLISHED

With this tabulation fresh in his mind John Diefenbaker returned to Prince Albert, at 11:00 a.m. on June 8, exhausted after six gruelling weeks of campaigning. But when he arrived, he was told that a Liberal motorcade was about to swing through the outlying parts of his riding, and that he'd have to do the same. He had been able to spend only three hours in his own constituency since the campaign opened. His own organizers were so afraid people resented his absence that he spent all of Saturday barnstorming through the environs of Prince Albert. On Sunday, he finally rested.

The next day —June 10— in sultry, late-spring weather, Canadians turned out at the polls, 6.6 million strong. Early that evening, at his home on the Grand Allee in Quebec City, Louis St. Laurent settled in to listen to the results over his livingroom radio. The trend was established by the first poll to report—Sable Island, a traditionally Liberal sandbar, 180 miles east of Halifax, peopled only by meterorologists and lightkeepers. This night, the Sable Islanders went for Diefenbaker by a majority of two votes. Then Newfoundland, the closed preserve of Liberal Premier Joey Smallwood, reported the election of two Tories. The island had been solidly Liberal in 1953. In Nova Scotia, the trickle turned into a tide. Instead of their previous single seat, the Conservatives won ten. On Prince Edward Island— Liberal since 1935 —all four seats fell to Diefenbaker. In New Brunswick, the Conservatives scored a gain of two. Only in Quebec did the Liberal fortress hold: just three extra seats went Tory.

VICTORY NOT DECISIVE

The Tory victory was far from decisive. The CCF and Social Credit had been returned with increased strength from the western provinces; the Liberals had held Quebec. For the first time since 1925, a federal election had failed to return a majority to the House of Commons. After one Tory member-elect died and the service vote had been counted the result was:

Conservatives	111
Liberals	10
CCF	25
Social Credit	19
Independents	4

Statistically, what Diefenbaker had accomplished was to increase the Conservative vote by 826,830 ballots—38 per cent of the total popular vote as compared with 30 per cent in the 1953 contest. The Conservative Party still had 218,000 fewer votes than the Liberals, but most of the Liberal margin had been wasted in safe Quebec seats. The results signified that Diefenbaker had persuaded one 1953 Liberal voter in twelve to abandon his Party for the Conservatives. Premier Leslie Frost had delivered Ontario. Diefenbaker received 48 per cent of the Ontario vote—eight per cent more than in 1953 and enough to increase his party's Ontario representation from 33 to 61.

The Liberal losses looked even worse on close examination. Nine Liberal ministers— nearly half the cabinet—had been defeated. The Liberal Party had been cornered into becoming virtually a French-Canadian political movement. Seventy-five of the 105 seats it retained had predominantly French-speaking populations, or at least substantial French minorities. St. Laurent could constitutionally remain in office until defeated on a non-confidence vote in the Commons, but the Liberal humiliation seemed too great to permit this kind of manoeuvring.

"TALLER AND ALONE"

Just before noon, on June 21 1957, John Diefenbaker and 13 jolly Tories arrived at Rideau Hall to be sworn in as the new Government of Canada. "I, John George Diefenbaker, do solemnly swear that I will serve Her Majesty truly and faithfully in the Place of Her Council in this. Her Majesty's Dominion of Canada..." he repeated, bent down to kiss the ceremonial Bible, and whispered. "So help me God."

With those words, he became the thirteenth man to serve as Prime Minister of Canada. He looked curiously taller that day, and somehow already alone. A man transfixed by the inextinguishable wonder of the occasion.

Half a mile away, in an oddly silent office at the extreme west end of Parliament Hill, a proud old man was listlessly leafing through his appointments calendar. Eighty-one supplicants had requested interviews with the Right Honourable Clarence Decatur Howe for after June 10, but it was doubtful that any of them would want to see him now. He shrugged. Then he leaned over to his telephone table, dialled a number, and ordered his broker to sell most of his equity stocks. "I don't trust this new bunch," he said and hung up.

NEXT: The 1958 Election

EAST BALTIC

Irvin Robertson and son Glen Kingsboro, visited with Mrs. Irvin Robertson who is a patient in the P.E.I. Hospital.

Miss Elsie Jardine, left on return to Worchester, Mass., having spent several months with her mother Mrs. James Jardine, Bothwell.

Miss Debra Dixon, East Baltic spent a few days with Mr. and Mrs. Peter MacInnis, Souris Line Road.

Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Mossey and two children spent New Year's with Mrs. Mossey's parents in North Rustico.

Mrs. John W. Robertson, Kingsboro spent several days with her aunt Mrs. George Grant, Charlottetown.

Mr. and Mrs. Hartley Jardine and son Allan, Kingsboro are visiting with Mrs. Jardine's parents in Toronto.

Ralph Robertson, well known and efficient mail driver was most pleasantly surprised on his last trip with the mail when he was presented at the East Baltic post office with a lamp and purse of money which was given to him by his patrons of his 20 mile route. Mr. Robertson faced all kinds of weather and it was very rare that he did not make the trip. His son George Robertson is now carrying on the mail route from East Baltic post office.

Miss Betty Ching, RT, at the P.E.I. Hospital, Charlottetown spent the holidays with her mother Mrs. Clarence Ching and family, Black Pond.

Mrs. Irving Robertson, Kingsboro is now making a good recovery from her recent operation in the P.E.I. Hospital and expects to return to her home shortly.

Mr. and Mrs. John Reiley, Dundas, spent Christmas with Mrs. Reilly's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Robertson Red Point.

Roddie Kidson, Red Point is ill at his home.

Miss Marilyn Dixon. RN, Charlottetown, spent Christmas with her parents, Mr. and Mrs Roy Dixon, Bothwell.

Mr. and Mrs. Merton Bruce, Red Point, have recently moved in to their lovely new home.

Mrs. Rhoda Morrow, North Lake spent Christmas with her sister Mrs. and Mr. Stewart MacGregor and family, East Baltic.

Mrs. Arthur Bruce Red Point is out and about again following her illness with the flu.

Miss Mary MacPhee, nurse-in training at the Charlottetown Hospital, spent the holidays with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sept. MacPhee, Little Harbour.

Albert Dixon, Sudsbury, Ont., is visiting with his mother Mrs. R.W. Dixon, East Baltic.

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Keus, Kingsboro, spent Christmas with Mr. Keus' parents, Mr. and Mrs. M. Keus, Souris.

Joseph and Currie Doucette, East Baltic, spent the holidays with relatives in Rustico.

Mrs. Charles Ching, Red Point, visited recently with Mrs. George Grant, Charlottetown.

Miss Noel Holland, North Lake spent a few days with friends in Cardigan.

Miss Rownea Garrett, Charlottetown, spent the holidays with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Foster Garrett, East Baltic.

Miss Edith MacGregor, East Baltic spent a few days with friends in Wilmot Valley, P.E.I.

Several of the children in this area did not enjoy the chicken pox during the holidays.

Miss Barbara MacInnis, Souris Line Road spent New Year's with Mr. and Mrs. Robert A. Dixon, East Baltic.

Sterling Robertson and Edwin Fraser, left on return to Toronto, Ont., having spent Christmas at their homes in Kingsboro and Red Point.

Earle Kennedy is ill at his home in Kingsboro.

Miss Joyce Bruce, nurse-in-training at the P.E.I. Hospital spent the weekend with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Bruce, Bothwell

Miss Alice Kennedy, Boston, Mass., and formerly of Kingsboro, spent the holidays with her family in Charlottetown.

Move Afoot To Expand Boundaries Of Halifax

HALIFAX (CP)—Like a dowager bursting through her girdle, 219-year-old Halifax is straining at the confinement of its ancient boundaries and a move is afoot to give it growing space by quintupling its area.

The city of 92,511 people is hemmed into a peninsula of seven square miles almost circled by arms of the Atlantic. The landward boundary across a mile-wide isthmus has not had a major change since it was drawn in 1841.

Mayor Charles A. Vaughan wants the city to annex five neighboring suburbs of Jollimore, Rockingham, Armdale, Fairview and Spryfield plus 9,400 acres of watershed land west of the city. The annexation would be gradually carried out over three years.

The move would add to the city's population about 28,000 people and boost its area from its present 4,400 acres to about 22,000.

City manager Peter Byars says it is apparent that the city—whose population is growing by 2.3 per cent a year—cannot now handle many more than 100,000 even after all available building sites are utilized.

Few sites suitable for detached buildings are left. Almost all new residential construction is apartments.

OPPOSE METRO

Mr. Byars says that cities that have made use of their annexation powers have avoided the accumulation of the metropolitan problems that lead to the establishment of a new level of government.

He said that wherever a metropolitan system of government has been organized it has resulted in backbiting, bickering and dissatisfaction. He named Toronto, Winnipeg and Montreal as examples.

"The best way to solve suburban growth problems is to annex the potential growth area before the city is hemmed in by incorporated satellite towns," he said.

TRAIN IN INDIA

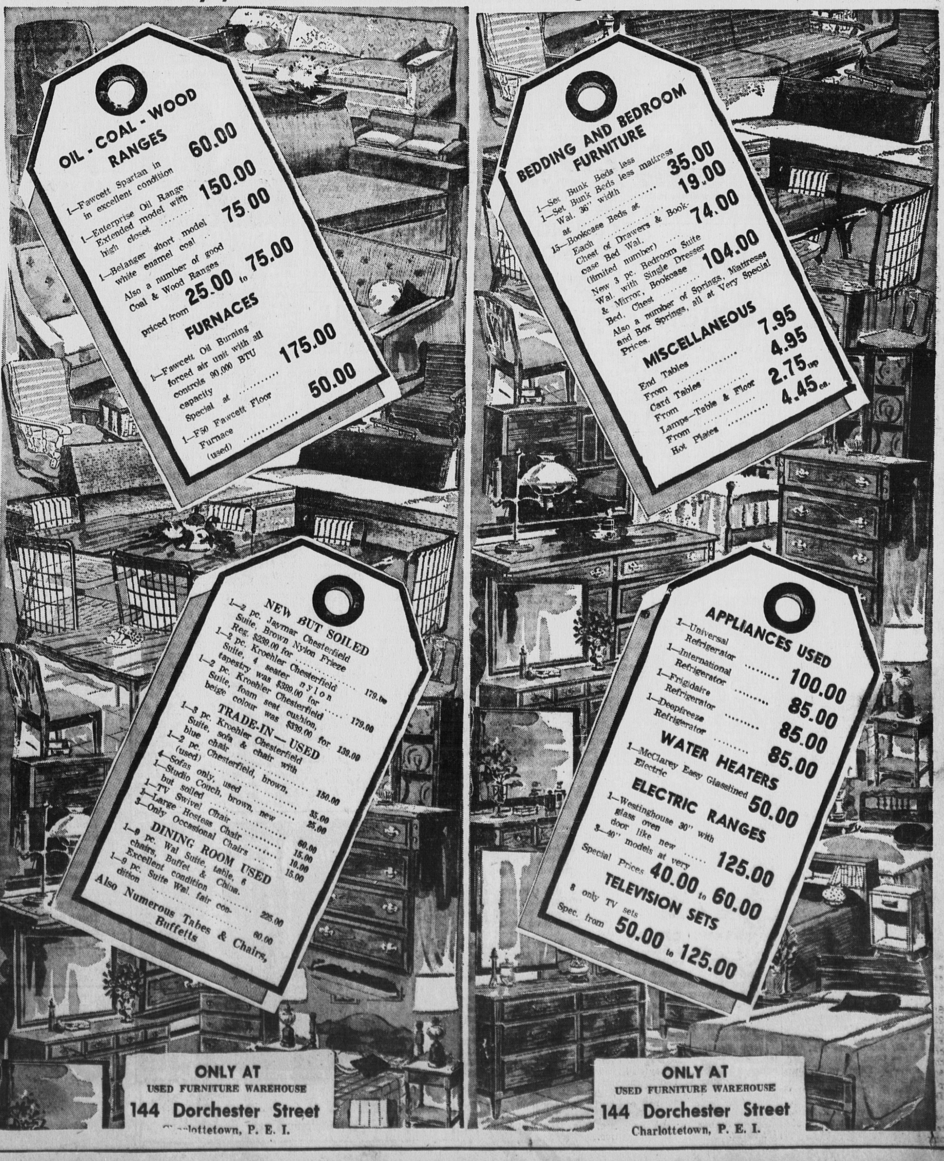
India provided training facilities for 2,156 persons under the Colombo Plan in 1962-63.

CITY DUMP LITTER TROUBLES FARMERS

Athol MacDonald's farm at Mermaid looks like this. Every year when the Hillsboro River (background) freezes and there is a west wind, litter from the Charlottetown dump is carried to this area at Mermaid and Mt. Herbert. Farmers in these areas have voiced concern on several occasions, but there doesn't seem to be any solution at the present. Most are hoping that the new incinerator will help solve their problems. In the meantime, Mr. MacDonald is wondering what can be done about the present mess. "There will be a big cleaning job in the spring," he says.

WAREHOUSE SALE

144 DORCHESTER STREET

of TRADE-IN FURNITURE, RANGES and APPLIANCES

which have many years of useful service remaining - and at VERY LOW COST!