

Liberal leadership convention invades C.P. hotel

Over 1550 eligible voters cast their ballots last Saturday at the Liberal Leadership convention held in Charlottetown. Islanders from all walks of life took part in the democratic process. Farmers in their Sunday suits conversed with the Charlottetown businessmen, and the politicians diplomatically spoke to anyone who would listen.

In case you have not heard, Catherine Callbeck won with an overwhelming majority. Surprise, surprise.

If money talked at this convention, Callbeck was screaming. Banners, buttons, and posters with Kate's likeness abounded throughout the hotel. Not that she needed it. Many delegates had their vote cast for the former MP before they even drove to the event. The convention seemed more like a formality that Callbeck had to attend.

Her speech was less than overwhelming. She read it with the emotional pull of a dead guppy. She mentioned her hope for the future. She stated that Islanders have fallen behind in

academic achievements, but that she believed she had a remedy. She added that since 1986, Mulroney has continued to reduce transfer payments, ergo we must become more self-reliant. She informed the delegates that we should build on our traditional strengths. She also droned that she would take immediate steps to reduce debt on a short term basis and develop a long term program of deficit reduction. Sure. To sum it up, Callbeck blew through all of the politically correct cliches and exited the stage to prepare for her acceptance speech. I was less than inspired. Callbeck was a blown-up poster with a speech attached. She exhibited zero personality. Her speech was not felt, it was merely read.

Then came Bill Campbell, candidate numero deux. Campbell screamed that small is beautiful and added a toilet analogy. He received 77 out of 1556 votes. Enough said.

Larry Creed was the "grass roots candidate". He based his platform on common sense. Many believe that if this young man had

had more political experience, he would have had a better chance. As one Political Studies major from U.P.E.I. stated, "I may not be voting for him, but I can't help liking him." Stanley Bruce, MLA Fourth Kings, would not disclose who he was voting for. He did infer that he expected Callbeck to win, and that "In this business, you can't start at the top, you have to start at the bottom -- and even then it is hard enough." Bruce did not expect Creed to win. Quite frankly, neither did a lot of people.

The final results saw Callbeck as the winner with 1228 out of 1556 votes. Nobody was really surprised. You could also sense that few were even excited. It was too much of a done deal. You could hear the applause, but you could not feel it. The law of physics moved the hands to clap; not emotion.

As one voter told me, "No one cares about a game that is already won."

I wonder what the betting odds were at this convention. ●

Calling Catherine Callbeck

by Jane Smith

The Liberal Leadership race is finally over, and it was a shock to nobody that Catherine Callbeck will be our next premier. When Premier Ghiz announced that he would be resigning as head of the Liberal Party and Premier of Prince Edward Island, Callbeck was the first to announce her candidacy. It seemed then that the race was over before it even began. With the backing of the big wigs of the party she seemed to scare the other possible contenders off. One by one the most respected members of the Liberal Party declined to run against Callbeck, either because they did not want the job or did not want to run against the party favorite.

The real fun began when working man Larry creed entered the race in November, proclaiming himself the "beans and baloney" candidate. The grass roots of the party had their man. Creed joined the race because he thought Callbeck and the rest of the party were not addressing the necessary issues, and he did not want the party brass to get away with simply

crowning Callbeck as leader. Although Creed's bid for leadership was not taken seriously by many people, it showed a division within the party. It makes one wonder what would have happened if they had followed the lead of the Liberal party of Nova Scotia and given each party member a vote, rather than just the delegates.

The other leadership bid came from federal civil servant Bill Campbell. Mr. Campbell has the reputation of being a social activist. His campaign promise was to accomplish 0% unemployment. In the end, he was in last place with only 77 votes. Creed was second with 250 and Callbeck collected 79% of all votes cast. Rather impressive considering her speech on Saturday did not inspire the crowd as much as Creed's did. It did, however, seem to affect some people. One young delegate, when asked why she voted for Callbeck, replied "she made a nice speech"; how articulate.

Now that our new premier is in place, most of us are wondering what she plans on doing about soaring tuition and dilapidated buildings

at U.P.E.I. It seems most likely that she will do much the same as her predecessor- nothing. There was much talk at the convention over education, but everyone must have thought that education on P.E.I. stops at grade school. With our traditional forms of livelihood diminishing, more attention has to be payed to our post-secondary education if we are ever to become competitive and prosperous. We at U.P.E.I. should remind these politicians that each of us get to cast a vote in the next provincial election.

Catherine Callbeck stands a good chance of making history as the first elected female Premier in Canada, an honor one would think. Perhaps not to Callbeck, as she makes a point of distancing herself from women's issues, forgetting that in past generations the women who tackled these issues are the reason she got where she is today. Some people think Island women should be pleased with having a woman represent us, but in my opinion Callbeck is nothing more than one of the boy's club in pantyhose. ●