

# Scuba, disco & dozy wife

There are two stupidities in the current election campaign which set me growling.

The first one may die away. It arose specifically last Monday when Trudeau warned Clark and the country about Clark's government taking any initiatives during the election period. In Trudeau's theories of rights and power a government defeated in the House (seemingly in contrast to a government such as his which called the '79 election without being defeated in the House) cannot be more than the most neutral of caretakers. And if it is considering something like a response to Carter's initiatives about the USSR in Afghanistan, then it should discuss it first with the leader of the Official Opposition.

Somehow this silly point got dressed up into a serious thing. Reporters went streaming off to talk to constitutional experts. Good lord, it doesn't take any "big think" or even the precedents the Tories flouted from Trudeau's lame duck electoral period in '72 to know that the power stays with the government until the government is replaced. There is a "common sense" factor at work. What government would make a horse's ass of itself in an electoral period by either wild policy divergences from the past or by appointing a swatch of partisans to top posts?

In other words, the whole exercise begun by Trudeau shows that he's either tending towards the "bonkers" or he thinks the country will swallow any foolishness providing it is tied in with ridiculing or undercutting Joe Clark.

The second stupidity has been with us for some years and it's flowering again. I put stock in letters to the editor and to the "streeters" done by papers like the *Sun* and the *Star* in Toronto. Currently, the tallies reflect the Gallup; even more they show an attitude in the electorate which the scientific polls can't. One gets comments such as: "Clark is a bumbler." "Clark is an embarrassment." "Trudeau is a world statesman." "Trudeau put us on the world scene." "Clark doesn't look like a man to deal with the top men of the world." And so on.

These comment do tell you what people think. Often when you connect the names with the comments you see an ethnic link. That is, the Liberals may have a good share of support in the WASP community but they simply clean up the so-called ethnic vote. Among the reasons for this support, insofar as Trudeau goes, is simply the years he had as head of state and the identity he picked up in ethnic Canadians' minds from travels and visits with the leaders of other nations.

But when you begin to analyze the reality behind the opinion so widely held here that Trudeau is a genuine statesman of world stature, you are into bunkum. Indeed, it could be argued that his very high recognition factor beyond Canada owes more to an errant, even dozy, girl-wife than to any acts of his government or any specific achievements of his own. Certainly he's had encomiums from the quality press of the Western world but there's good reason for this. Anyone who reads this press knows that Canada is much less interesting to them than the host of banana republics which form their old colonial empires. They seize on Trudeau (and more often, Margaret) as inter-

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esting because he is something they recognize from their own tradition — a pseudo-aristocratic, wealthy intellectual.

As for "enhancing Canada's world reputation," as a young lady put it to me the other day, surely Trudeau's deeds speak louder than words.

We may not count for much in the real interests or concerns of the international press but European governments know that we are running huge budget and trade deficits. They know that we allowed our commitments to Western defence, even our boy scout role as peace-keepers, to wither during the Trudeau period. Where does that leave our international "rep"?

And if someone mentions the Jerusalem fiasco in this context, I'd remind you that however dumb and crass was that ploy and reversal by Clark, Trudeau was responsible for some assays in international affairs which seem even dumber and crasser, once you see them in longer perspective, not as they first broke.

Do you remember all that stuff we had from Trudeau and the Liberals in his early years about our "third option" in international affairs, and how this led by degrees to a remarkable chilling of relations with Washington until the PQ crisis in late '76 drove Trudeau down to the American capital for a forum and our neighbor's presidential and congressional influences against Levesque's Quebec?

Almost as touted, certainly reiterated *ad nauseum* for at least three years, was the Trudeau initiative for "the contractual link." Remember that bluster on how we would negotiate a special arrangement with the European Economic Community which would give us more trade with EEC countries and a saner balance in trade and payments with the U.S.? There never was much of worth to the contractual link stuff but five to six years after Trudeau began to diddle it in the international air we can see what a small balloon it was.

No, the facts are that his wife's antics, his longevity in our top office, his apparent intellectualism and his playboy image (e.g. dating Barbra Streisand) made him more widely known to more people outside Canada than any previous PM, including Pearson.

It's regrettable in a way that Trudeau is not a real world statesman with both the track record and the skills to match. Then we might be able to count on him for the diplomacy and the long, hard negotiations ahead with Claude Ryan or some other Quebec premier. But you don't make progress with the Ryans and the Loughdees with the talents dramatized in scuba-diving or disco dancing. It's also obvious you don't hold in politics, or bring back the best of your former ministers, unless you are a bit of a statesman.