

PARTIAL TEXT OF REMARKS OF
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It is good of you to have me today since there is not the slightest possibility -- as I see it -- that I shall say anything you will want to hear. But at least it allows me an opportunity to deny that I have retired from life, or that life has retired from me.

The rumors of this have reached me after the very generous promotion given my book by the Globe & Mail Magazine which took up a whole cover of its October 17th issue proclaiming, in letters of gold, the simple legend: "The Memoirs of Dalton Camp." It convinced a few people that I had indeed passed on, and others that I was even older than I looked which is, God knows, old enough.

I must tell you that my publisher -- and his sensitive, imaginative and demonic promotion people -- had all wanted to describe my literary effort as "the memoirs" of Dalton Camp. Quite frankly, this offended me. I am simply not ready to write my memoirs yet; I associate such a task

with a fully ripened age, a last station in life, taking up residence on the downward slope of the other side of the hill. So I persistently said to my publisher, to hell with this memoir business. Which, as anyone can plainly see, had no effect whatsoever. As those who have published written works will know, and as others will find out when they do, you are what your publisher says you are, just as you are whatever the media say you are.

So, I am retired. Those of you who do not know what I have retired from should ask the promoters of my book. I have retired from the political back-rooms, that's what. Now, I happen to feel that is somewhat of a distortion of the truth. I realize it is more titillating if one can be presented as some kind of zombie sprung from the conspiratorial dark of smoke-filled sanctums where politicians and their agents divide the spoils of office or plot their opportunity to do so. That's the sort of stuff that television scenarios are made of, and maybe even sells books.

For about four years I was the National President of one of Canada's major political parties, and the only conspiracy I indulged in involved about five million other Canadians, gleefully working with me. Never was a plot so fully proclaimed in advance, never was it more completely reported; there were speeches at public meetings

daily, the press -- and others -- made a thorough search of my life, examined my motives, analyzed my chances, predicted the failure of my design, turned on the cameras for the nation to see it. And when everyone from John Bassett to Lubor J. Zink turned out to be wrong, they could only conclude that I had kept something from them, like a trick play that didn't get into the scouting report. I have not been forgiven, and it has been concluded, I fear, that the whole business was concocted in a back-room after all -- one of the rooms they missed.

Lately, of course, the press has unretired me -- or at least the cartoonists have. Once again, I owe a debt to the Globe & Mail who, after the defeat of the Tory Government in Nova Scotia, portrayed me standing outside a campaign headquarters saying, with some sort of mysterious exuberance, "Well, you can't win them all." So you see these have been busy days; writing my memoirs, losing Nova Scotia, that sort of thing.

After the New Brunswick election, darkness fell upon the drawing board of the cartoonist for the Globe & Mail. I don't want to be misunderstood -- I had almost as little to do with the result in New Brunswick as I did with the result in Nova Scotia. The main difference being that while I spent more time in Nova Scotia, I prayed harder

for New Brunswick. But perhaps that doesn't make a good cartoon.

However, as someone once remarked, I don't give a damn what the press says about me as long as it isn't the truth. I don't know who said that; perhaps it was Richard Nixon.

But now about politics and authorship. Winston Churchill once wrote a novel called, I believe, Savronola. He later said that it took him a year to write it and the rest of his life begging his friends not to read it. I hope this will not be the case with Gentlemen, Players and Politicians.

I do not wish to be belligerent about it, but I hope not to spend any time at all arguing with people who saw things differently. Everyone has a different perspective and vantage point; memory can often be capricious, both theirs and mine. What matters, surely, in a personal narrative is that one remains faithful to one's own perspective, and that one records the thoughts and feelings and recollections of events that persist in the memory and which the inner ear have recorded.

What one tried to do is recreate something of the texture of politics, the almost constant irony of political circumstance, the greater and lesser elements of luck, and the various contributions of minor members of the cast which are so often crucial to the results.

Much of the substance of the book is about the Maritimes, which, to someone born and raised in Upper Canada, is a rather out-of-the-way place. But office-seekers, and office-holders, have much in common, even if the geography differs. I have found very little different in the motivation of a man who wants to be a provincial premier as compared to the man who lusts to be Prime Minister of Canada.

And it all involves that endlessly fascinating and complex game of politics which, like football, is recognizable at first sight, wherever it is being played and no matter who the players are. I do not mean to say that the game has been and is always the same, because politics in Canada has changed -- and nothing has so convinced me of that as recent events. Of course it has changed, along with the condition of the society, the limits of technology, and the vast extension in the role of government.

Gentlemen, Players and Politicians covers a period in our political history that has come and gone -- brief, fleeting and transient -- which was the postwar years until 1968, when again politics was new again. Let me remark here that I did not say better, but only new.

I rose through the ranks of a political party quicker than most for two reasons: the first being that I could write better than most, and the second being that because I had been trained in the business of advertising, I had acquired an expertise that was of premium value to politicians. Because I knew about these things, it was assumed that I had secret powers, like a water diviner or a soothsayer, and many with similar gifts suddenly became more important to political parties than lawyers, even.

Politicians at the turn of this age had traditionally appealed to their electorates by going from stump to stump -- a long and tiring process, and if they were inarticulate, as many of them are, it was a painful process. Others went from door-to-door, hawking their qualifications for public office.

Believe it or not, it was the Liberal Party in the little province of New Brunswick which first discovered there was another way. It was the first political

organization of record to employ an advertising agency to conduct its election campaign. For that reason, among others, the results were so successful that others hastened to follow New Brunswick's example. And now politicians could reach thousands at one time -- and on their own terms -- without interruption, with words drafted for them by experts, while they saw themselves portrayed without their warts, with all the human clay retouched from their photographs. Politicians took on the image of divinities -- you could tell they were super-human because they had no navels.

But even though the politicians and their parties were so elaborately camouflaged, people seemed able to discern their real worth. What was different was the rising level of awareness among the voters, the subtle changes in organizational priorities within the parties, and the fact that what began to matter most in political campaigns was not the value of one's policy, but the ability of one's agency. It put a premium not so much on politicians who could phrase their own thoughts, but men who could creditably read the thoughts of others. It was the beginning of the politics of style, in which the first requirement of the politician was that he be able to perform in the media of radio and television, more especially the latter. The

political ghost-writer extended himself into the new medium through the teleprompter, which maintained his control over his subject. Cosmetics were employed, camera angles adjusted, and Marshall McLuhan intrigued the spectators by suggesting that some politicians were hot and others were cool.

Some resented the new order of things: the lawyers who thought political campaigns were really an appeal to one vast jury, as Meighen did, now complained that the jury had become a kind of consumer panel. The journalists did not like it much either -- at least not until or unless they got themselves into public relations -- because they had lost their dominance of their own media to the restless energies of advertising agencies who were buying full pages and television spots, often in order to circulate opinions contrary to that held by the journalists. It was a little unnerving to have reported that a party rally had been attended by some 500 -- a conservative estimate for a conservative meeting -- and then discover that a television spot which transfigured the meeting into a wildly enthusiastic crowd of several thousand. How could the public interest endure such malevolent bias?

Do you wonder, then, that it is the instinctive reaction of many to somehow limit and curtail this influence? Help restore politics to its original innocence when its affairs were so nicely managed as a sort of extension of legal aid; give the game back to the gifted amateurs; politics for the politicians.

The age is past. The sun has set on the era of the advertising expert. But let me say that the new dawn will show politics in a more sinister light. What we shall do, out of necessity in part~~y~~, is to limit the use of television to the parties, limit the funds they may spend for advertising, and inhibit the extent to which they have access to the media. It has already been done in Quebec and in New Brunswick.

But one of the corollary phenomena is the steady burgeoning of government propaganda facilities. Watch them grow, as they are growing now. It is said, by those who govern this ^aappartus, that it has been raised to inform us. You and I know -- if we know anything -- that it is being raised to propagandize us.

It is the calculation of the present-day politician that there are two avenues he must fully explore if he is to maintain power. The first is what we see -- the construction

of a modern, efficient instrument of propaganda. The second is vastly more sophisticated and complex, which is the manipulation of the media.

And I have never been so sure of that as I am today. While the country has been driven to a condition of crisis more grave than any in our history, while opinion has been deliberately and perhaps eternally polarized, we are not being told the truth -- we are not being told the truth about the government's motives, nor the truth about the dangers we are alleged to confront and are being confronted by. Whatever happened to the adage that it is the truth that sets men free -- keeps men free?

But we are being nourished by a steady trickle of rumor, half-truths and apparent linguistic confusions. The country is full of misinformation and simple ignorance.

The media -- particularly television -- has been used to inflame opinion, but not to enlighten it -- to harden prejudice and not to temper judgment -- to the end that those within our parliamentary system who are obliged to doubt are condemned for their lack of patriotism and those whose intuitive judgment is to resist being stampeded by emotion and propaganda have been labelled as "bleeding hearts."

I say it smacks of a strangely alien authoritarianism, as though technology had suddenly obliged us to forsake so much of our tradition and custom which almost alone have made us a civilized society.

Suddenly, because dissent is natural to me -- a part of being a non-conformist conservative -- I wish I had a role to play in politics, and that I had not given them up. Not because I am so egocentric as to believe the country needs me, but because I feel, for the first time in my life, how much I need the country.

What a pity to have squandered so much of our promise in one compulsive act. Let me say that I acknowledge that perhaps no one is to blame, while all of us are to blame. It has been our nature for too long to believe largely what we want to believe, to idealize our politicians, to fantasize our condition, and to presume our happy future.

But I can only say to you what I have said before, in a rhetorical if not perfunctory way, on so many similar occasions to so many like people: now, for the first time, it has the force of urgency. The question is no longer, as many used to phrase it, how do I get into politics? -- the question ought to be, how can I remain outside it?

As I hope you know -- as I am sure you know -- this country will not soon -- if ever -- be the same. What it will become is open to discovery. If it is to be anything like a free society, it will be up to you, as much as anyone else.