

GLV

THE GOOD LIFE IN VANCOUVER

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Featured in this issue:

Spas



COPE COUP



BY JOHN EITEL

VANCOUVER'S



NEW MAYOR

High Jacked the election! Unbelievable ... even by B.C. standards this was a Coup. As quiet as a stealth bomber, they moved in on a night darker than an east end alley... and there they were. What started out as a snicker up the cuff-linked sleeve at the Vancouver Club, turned into political momentum and a power grab from sleeping professional politicians. How did they pull this off?

Well, somewhere, somehow, Larry Campbell and his posse' of COPE'rs were able to touch the same moral, emotional almost spiritual chord in Vancouverites that the aboriginal people did some years ago in Canada. It is a cross between the flag, Mom, apple pie and who we would all like to be. How do you say no to the downtrodden and disadvantage? The political bottom line and reality is that in both cases taxpayer's money shall be thrown their way...in a big way...and we have a new Mayor.

Is the honeymoon still on? Well, lets give them benefit of the doubt and wish them well in the most traditional of ways:

Something Old: Sullivan, Louie and Bass.
Time honoured and returned to govern.

Something New: Campbell, Green, Cadman,
Louie (Raymond), Woodsworth, Roberts,
Ladner and Stevenson

Something Borrowed: Former Mayor Phillip
Owens' Four Pillars proposal.

Something Blue: The downtown Eastside –
it can be a sad and blue place.

There...congrats, mazel tov and celestial blessings to you all.
Now, lets do some business!

Who is this guy Larry Campbell? Reported as reluctant leader; he never belonged to a political party before being asked to lead the city out of apathy and darkness. Pretty romantic eh! To say or think that Larry Campbell doesn't know anything about politics would be foolish and dangerous. Right Jennifer? You don't survive the beaureaucratic rigors of the RCMP, City Hall, Da Vinci's Inquest, and acquire an MBA along the way and not "get it". This is a tough-guy. No nonsense, straight talking (some say bully), who has an agenda, a plan and a mandate from the people. Over 50% percent of the voters called

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him "forward". So enter the political stage Mr. Mayor, and welcome.

Recent Events

Well to be honest the Woodward's sit-in could not have been handled better. Our rookie Mayor and his right-hand man, Lefty (Jim Green) were able to quell the problem, steal the building from the province for a song and arrange for both Ottawa and Victoria through specialized ministries to shoulder most of the cost and effectively reduce the expense to the voters to a mere fraction of what it could have been. This was an explosive situation. Any time you have a social cause, a perceived social cause or a cause du jour, you always attract the left wing anarchists. Anarchists hate. They hate the police, they hate the system, they hate their lives and look to spread this hatred to whoever will listen. They play the media like a tune and exhort any feelings of discontent and injustice from the disadvantaged, so that they might blend in with the legitimate homeless. This element was on the inside of the building and some were armed. These people were surgically/non-violently removed from inside the building, a deal was struck and order was restored. Of the 124 people holed up there, City Hall believes that 100 were legitimate homeless people and since then, they have been taken care of. The Woodward's Building (like it or not), will now house the homeless through government-subsidized housing. The capital cost otherwise, would have been in the hundreds of thousands of dollars per day for Police to service the city and who knows what human carnage could have resulted. Well done.

Olympics

In the Mayors pre-election rhetoric, and in effort to show the pedestrian manner with which the NPA govern the city, he called for a plebiscite on the Olympics. Interesting? This left wing, lighter shade of red COPEr found it necessary and convenient to go directly to the political right of the spectrum and cry for democracy. They felt that the people should have more of a say in how things run. Is there anything more blatant and obviously patronizing? The fact that this plebiscite sent chills through the International Olympic Committee, the province and the country seemed inconsequential as compared to the expedient political rewards for COPE. But it worked. Not only was this inexperienced politician capable of grabbing international, national and above all, local acclaim; he put a political spin on what some might see as a mediocre response to the plebiscite into overwhelming enthusiasm on behalf of Vancouver voters for their *documented* acceptance and support of the games. Mr. Campbell will go down in history as showing the

world that Vancouver is the only city in Olympic history to register in a documented and categorical manner, their acceptance of the Olympic Standard. They will tell you they planned it...I doubt it.

Right Again

The Mayor has not been wrong on many of the early issues. Of course it is easy to be right when you agree with both sides of each issue. Mr. Campbell found it necessary to question the Vancouver Olympic Bid costing the city \$500,000 to pose a question that he himself disagreed with (leadership?). In the Woodward's event, he refused to be held hostage by the squatters, however at the same time he championed their plight in his next breath. Someone should tell the Mayor that traditionally the right to speak out of both sides of your mouth in this country is coveted and reserved for those Canadian politicians who address the media in both French and English. This behaviour will not fly if Mr. Campbell wants to continue to enjoy the Good Life in Vancouver.

Pillars/Schmillars

The Four Pillars was an activated plan laid down by former mayor, Philip Owen. Mr. Campbell would quickly agree that this belongs to his predecessor. Interesting, one man's poison... Anyway, I am not here to debate the ramifications of all four pillars, except to say that from the onset that this is a very good thing. Anyone who has witnessed the sad and tragic daily events of the Eastside cannot help but be moved. To know that if they look like this on the outside, what a frightening, lonely and horrible place must exist on the inside. If we can help we should.

Safe injection sites can make all the sense in the world. But make no mistake this program, at least in the beginning, will not stop drug use; this is a fight against Aids. Aids has become the flagship for a lot of dialogue and money garnering. The use of drugs is the fruit of the evil. Whatever drove these poor souls to the dependence of a dirty needle in the arm or a hit of crack on the street did not happen here. The evil that brought them to our doorstep by and large happened in another environment. If there were a way to suffer abuse/self esteem problems at school or at home and **not show up** on the curb in Vancouver, the good people of the world would have discovered it by now. A solution is yet to be found. The obligation to help at this stage is honourable, compassionate and necessary. These users have no understanding of year, month, day, family, children or future. The simple truth is that their lives are measured in the length of time that it takes to score \$20 for another hit. Sad, but true.

We are the Living

Thus far in life our Mayor elect has only had success in the clearly dead, the acting dead and the walking dead. There is much more to the most beautiful city in the world than the Eastside. A port city positioned 38 clicks north of the most powerful country in the world and the business gateway to the Far East. A city situated almost exactly half way between Western Europe and the Asia Pacific countries as the crow flies. An ice-free harbour that can operate at the same time as providing some of the greatest snow skiing in the world. A flourishing commercial center that hosts 6.5 million overnight visitors who spend \$1.7 Billion each year. Vancouver has a recorded population of 545,671 (2001) of which the whopping majority of us would rather eat dirt than put a needle in our arm.

We are going to need a Mayor too!

During the highjacking of the election and the almost divinely providential over taking of the Woodward's Building, we stopped talking about civic management. And while fiscal management may sound boring to the protesting class it will be necessary, now more than ever. A shaky economy that will not escape the next US recession, the Vancouver leadership will be accountable to all of us who enjoy the Good Life in Vancouver. Providing somewhere between 7500 – 15000 hard core drug addicts with safe shooting galleries at an estimated cost of \$150 Million for the first three years and then miraculously start "dropping" in cost after the third year is a bold claim. A financial feat given that there is no provision in the city budget. And indeed bowing from the ankles would be in order if any government program went down in cost after *any* length of time. For some in power, this is the living laboratory for urban anthropology. So far, so good. But no one can afford an explosion in the Lab, if you get my drift.

Parting Freebie

As this article is being submitted, there is a juicy swirl surrounding some ill-advised comments about why there is money for emergency SARS clinics and not for injection sites. I am letting this one pass in an effort to prolong the honeymoon. The Mayor needs to listen to his handlers and be careful he does not fall prey to political Gum Drop Disease. That is when an idea comes into one's head, drops down onto the tongue and immediately comes out.

Here is an interesting thought. The last time I witnessed a non-lawyer, local citizen win an upset mayoralty race and he, himself, being the most surprised person in the city was Ralph Klein...

Mr. Mayor raise your right hand. You are hereby charged with the responsibility of maintaining the Good Life in Vancouver for all of us.

Your humble scribe.

P.S.

For all of those right-wingers who did not see fit to vote and are unhappy about this situation...Silence!!

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