

Real Caouette Looks Like Filing Clerk But Holds Audience Like An Evangelist

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OTTAWA — Real Caouette—clown or savior?

The man who will hold the balance of power in the new House of Commons has the appearance of a filing clerk, and the platform manner of an evangelist.

He employs humor that leaves his Quebec hearers convulsed with mirth. In the next instant, he can have them out of their seats, cheering themselves hoarse, responding to his intonations the way a symphony orchestra responds to Stravinsky.

Stravinsky is the master of discord to many ears, and there are many Canadians who will feel that the voters of Quebec struck a sour note in playing Caouette's music so enthusiastically at the polls.

It is easy to conjure up images of Sinclair Lewis' "it can not happen here," or to draw parallels with the classic right-wing mass movements in Europe, notably Fascism.

But such judgments are at the very least premature, because the fact is that the violently-delivered speeches with which Caouette roused Quebec's voting fervor actually were moderate in their content.

These were no anti-communist ravings — the speeches of John Diefenbaker were much tougher on the Reds than those of Caouette and his followers.

POPULAR MESSAGE

There were no shouts of "to the wall," or "comes the revolution." Tons of perspira-

tion were expended by Caouette & Co., to bring the voters a message no more profound than that Quebec was fed up with the old parties, and had nothing to lose by voting Social Credit.

He cannot be judged by his policies until he brings those policies forward — any shivers that his successes may cause to small-"L" Liberals in the country are premature at this point.

My first real awareness of Caouette's impact on Quebec came at a meeting in Quebec City two weeks ago, where the crowd was double or triple the one drawn to the same hall by Prime Minister Diefenbaker and Lester Pearson.

KEPT THEM WAITING

Caouette kept them waiting for more than two hours, many of them standing outside in the rain. They overwhelmed him with grateful enthusiasm when he finally arrived. These people were in transports of ecstasy — the kind of thing that no old-party leader now on the scene could hope to induce.

They poured almost \$600 into the collection boxes — something else the old-line parties could not dream of doing.

The Quebec tradition is that parties pay their workers for their help — with Social Credit, it's the other way around. The workers are voluntary, and they have the true zeal of disciples.

When Caouette finally spoke at that meeting, they roared at his every sentence, lifted by his fiery gestures. At the end every-

body was soaking wet and emotionally spent, like a crowd at a revival meeting.

He remarked that the Liberals had been handing out free beans at their meetings. "When the Liberals were in, we had to buy our goddam beans," he exclaimed, amid waves of laughter.

He boasted that Alberta and British Columbia had been freed of direct debt by their Social Credit Governments, and the crowd responded as though he had announced the second coming.

"Have we had enough of the old parties?"

"Oui," came a thunderous chorus.

"Enough of the Tories?"

A mighty "oui."

"Enough of the Liberals and their unkept promises?"

"Oui, oui, oui!"

Who were these people?

To judge by the Quebec City classes — professional men, white collar workers, laborers. There seemed to be an unusual number of well-turned-out women.

But what distinguished them was not their dress, but the expressions on their faces. Many of them followed Caouette's every word, their lips moving in unison with his, picking up the cadence and starting their ovations before he had completed his phrases.

HOLDS BALANCE

This is the man who now holds the balance of power in Parliament. Working as he does so close to the bone of raw emotion, he could be dangerous — especially if he should ever start using words that would rouse his crowds to something beyond mere adulation of his own person. So far, this is something he has not done, but his ability to do it if he sees fit cannot be questioned.

He is a car dealer from the northwestern community of Rouyn who sold a half-interest in his agency to six employees so that he could devote more time to politics.

At the height of the election campaign, his itinerary read like a transportation timetable.

