

stepped down as leader of the Ontario NDP, was a kingpin in the party, with close ties to organized labour and the entire Eastern New Democratic establishment. Caplan, a former federal secretary of the NDP, was a skilled political operative and Lewis loyalist. They had an offer for Rae—a tempting one that he would find hard to refuse.

The Ontario party, Rae was told, was in disastrous shape. Under Michael Cassidy, the leader who had replaced Lewis in 1978, it was going nowhere. Cassidy, a humourless former financial journalist, had no ability to communicate, no pizzazz, and now—thank God—he had agreed to step down. Yet the Ontario NDP held great potential. It had been the official opposition in 1975—a position its federal counterpart had never come close to reaching. With luck, hard work, and a new, bright leader, they told Rae, the NDP might win power in Ontario. Rae, they said, should be that leader.

Rae was unsure. He liked the federal stage, felt comfortable in Ottawa. He liked talking about the grand issues of the day—monetary policy, macro-economic policy, the constitution. He knew nothing of the Ontario party and little about Ontario issues. He was happy.

But the pressure kept up. It was his duty, he was told. It was his fate. And if he became leader of the Ontario NDP, he might—he just might—end up as premier.

3

Party Animals

FOR THE NDP, THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 6, 1990, WAS

a scene of crazy jubilation. After decades in opposition and two near misses, the party had finally—finally—won power in Canada's largest province. At Rae's victory party, upstairs in La Rotonda banquet hall, on Toronto's Dufferin Street, the high and mighty of the NDP came to pay homage. Stephen Lewis and his wife, Michele Landsberg—up to this point at least, acknowledged within the NDP as the First Family of Ontario socialism—made their way up the stairs and through the milling crowd. For Lewis, there was a bittersweet element to the euphoria: more than a decade earlier he had hoped to be the one to make the historic breakthrough, and the failure rankled yet. Still, the NDP was his party and Rae a leader whom he had been instrumental in putting into place. The grin splitting the shark-like face that had once delighted political cartoonists was genuine. Landsberg, *The Toronto Star's* pugnacious feminist columnist, was less enthusiastic about Rae; he was a bit too know-it-all for her taste. But the new premier seemed sincerely interested in the kinds of women's issues that moved Landsberg; and his caucus contained some strong new feminist members. So she, like her husband, was smiling.

Sprinkled throughout were other NDP luminaries, such as Canadian Auto Workers chief Bob White, Leo Gerard of the Steelworkers, Ontario NDP president Julie Davis. All were there to see the man they

regarded as their premier in his first moment of glory. Over the next four years, many would become bitter critics of the government.

But that evening, there was no hint of the trouble to come. At the front, Rae, wearing the double-breasted blue suit that had become the trademark of his campaign and flanked by his wife and his sister, Jennifer, took the accolades with careful humility. During the campaign, Rae had savagely attacked the personal integrity of his Liberal opponent, David Peterson. But, on this night, vitriol was to be put aside. Peterson, Rae said, had waged his campaign with dignity, adding, "We've been there ourselves." The lesson of this campaign, he told the crowd, was that public trust must be earned. "We did not expect this result," he added.

Indeed, he had not. As Rae would admit later, he had been prepared to call it quits after the 1990 campaign, resign the leadership of his party, and retreat to something more cerebral. Perhaps he would write a book, he had told associates. And to this end, throughout 1989, Rae had been puttering away at a word processor in the corner of his office, trying to put into written form his thoughts on social democracy and the future of the NDP. "What We Owe Each Other," the result of this musing, was a rambling document linking Rae's reflections on the Fabians (from his Oxford Bachelor of Philosophy thesis) and his thoughts on his brother David's death. It touched on Native rights, the environmental movement, and the power of love. But a hard-edged political manifesto it was not. Nor, to be fair, was it meant to be. Rather, "What We Owe Each Other" seemed to be the swansong of someone who, at a fundamental level, felt he had failed in politics, who felt his party had failed and was trying to figure out why. Unfortunately for the NDP in 1990, it was virtually the only political program the party possessed.

The Ontario NDP, like its federal counterpart, had its roots in the Great Depression of the 1930s. Populist parties had long existed in Ontario. The great wave of rural populism which had swept North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had brought the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO) into being. In combination with independent Labour MPPs, the United Farmers swept to power in 1919, in the midst of a post-war recession. But the farmer-labour government soon collapsed, torn by the contradictions of its constituent groups and lacking a clear platform that would give it reason for existence. By the 1930s, most UFO politicians, except for a few diehards, had been swept into the provincial Liberals.

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was determined to avoid the ideological fuzziness of its populist predecessors. The platforms of the CCF, particularly the Regina Manifesto of 1933, established it, intellectually at least, as a socialist party in the so-called scientific tradition of European social democracy. It would have a program, based on public ownership of vital industries, peaceful parliamentary democracy, and planning. Its base would be the farmers, who wanted better prices; working people, who wanted jobs; and, in the words of the Regina Manifesto, "all who believe that the time has come for a far-reaching reconstruction of our economic and political institutions."

The Ontario CCF was quickly organized along similar lines. The CCF had been set up as a decentralized party, dominated in large part by its provincial organizations. But the struggles of the federal and Ontario organizations quickly became intertwined. Not only was Ontario the electoral and economic powerhouse of the Dominion, but both parties faced the same internal divisions—between farmers and labour, between purists who wanted to build a truly socialist party and those who wanted parliamentary seats, between Toronto intellectuals who contributed much of the ideological verve of the new party and almost everyone else. By 1934, the fractious Ontario CCF was deemed too radical by the national party. Federal leader J.S. Woodsworth moved in and disbanded the provincial leadership.

The Ontario CCF's first high point came in 1943. Riding on wartime disillusionment with the old-line parties, the CCF had become Ontario's official opposition, with thirty-four seats. In 1945, under the leadership of Ted Jolliffe, it seemed poised to seize power from George Drew's Conservatives. But in the campaign, Jolliffe charged that the government was using the Ontario Provincial Police to infiltrate the CCF. His strategy backfired. In the ensuing election, the CCF was reduced to an eight-seat rump. The party recovered its official-opposition status again in 1948. But in the 1952 election, it crashed again, emerging with only two seats.

In 1953, federal leaders parachuted Donald MacDonald into Ontario with the task of rebuilding the provincial party. It was no easy job.

MacDonald was by no means a doctrinaire socialist. As a young man, he had flirted strongly with the idea of running as a Conservative, but during the Depression was instead drawn into the CCF. A practical man, MacDonald set out to rebuild the Ontario CCF along lines that would make sense to the majority of voters. Party policies during the

MacDonald period were moderately collectivist; the CCF called for public health insurance and public ownership of the natural-gas distribution system. But MacDonald was perhaps best known for his humanist instincts—his emphasis on prison reform, for instance. As well, he effectively hammered away at the ruling Tories over a series of conflict-of-interest scandals, ranging from natural gas to land development.

MacDonald set a tone for the Ontario CCF-NDP that persisted into the 1980s: it was to be the party of a few moderate but dearly held principles; it would stand up for the dispossessed; it would have moral integrity.

But MacDonald fell victim to the urge for youth and change which swept Canada in the late 1960s. In 1961, the CCF had been reconstituted as the NDP. That change brought organized labour more directly into the running of the party; adherents hoped that, in return, the new party would gain the votes of unionized workers. In 1968, Canada went through its own belated version of Camelot with the election of Pierre Trudeau. By 1970, the Ontario NDP figured it was its turn. In a carefully engineered coup, MacDonald was replaced with thirty-three-year-old Stephen Lewis.

Lewis was from a different milieu. Articulate, passionate, and possessing an appreciation of his own political and oratorical qualities, Lewis had grown up with social democracy. His grandfather had been a socialist in Russian Poland; his father, David, had been the motive force behind the 1961 merger of the unions and the CCF.

Stephen; his brother, Michael; and his sister, Janet Solberg, became legendary in the NDP. Along with allies such as Gerry Caplan, the Lewises organized ridings that had never been organized, developed campaign strategies that had never been tried. Aided by their father's strong ties to the labour movement, they dominated the back-rooms of NDP conventions—twisting arms, doing deals, arranging outcomes. In 1968, Stephen was dispatched to Vancouver to persuade federal leader Tommy Douglas to make way for David Lewis (Douglas refused and held on until 1971). In 1970, Lewis's manoeuvrings in Ontario were more successful. Donald MacDonald stepped down, and Lewis, with a studied appeal to the left of the party, took over the Ontario NDP.

The party Lewis inherited was itself in the process of becoming reinvigorated. The so-called Red Belt around the nickel mining town of Sudbury had produced three MPPs—Bud Germa, Elie Martel, and Floyd Laughren—firmly on the left of the party. Germa was an old-time

socialist, a smelter worker with no love for either civil servants or the academic theorists who frequented the NDP. Laughren would later fondly recall him as a “real hard-hat.” Martel, a gruff, opinionated ex-teacher, was able to flourish as NDP House leader in the clubby back-rooms of Queen's Park, making deals with his Liberal and Tory counterparts while at the same time regularly calling for the nationalization of the giant Sudbury nickel mine owned by Inco Ltd.

Laughren, a community college economics teacher and son of an illiterate farmer, was the most easy-going of the Sudbury trio. But he was just as much a left-winger. For Lewis, trying to do the familiar NDP balancing act of soft-peddalling left-of-centre policies to a conservative electorate, the three were constant burrs beneath the saddle.

At the same time, Lewis's NDP had drawn to it a combination of activists and eccentrics. Millionaire Morton Shulman, for instance, used his position as the NDP member for High Park to carry on his various crusades against organized crime and corruption. Shulman, who entered the public eye as Toronto's fighting coroner (and became the model for a successful CBC television series), was adept at political theatre. At one point, he scandalized even the loose decorum of the legislature by brandishing a .22-calibre automatic rifle.

Coming into the 1970s, the NDP—particularly in Ontario—was torn by one of the grand ideological debates that have resurfaced throughout the party's history: Should it return to the more socialist roots of the Regina Manifesto? Or should it continue to water down its socialist content in the hope of winning more parliamentary seats? The debate over the Waffle group (so called because its adherents argued that, if they had to waffle, they would waffle leftwards) also split the party along one of its perennial fault lines, eventually pitting the Toronto intellectual wing (plus a strong contingent in Saskatchewan) against the parliamentary and union leadership.

In terms of content, the Wafflers were hardly extreme. They called for limited public ownership, along the lines of the Regina Manifesto, plus a strong dose of economic nationalism. Initially, in fact, the Waffle attracted a good many from the party establishment, such as future federal leader Ed Broadbent and Lewis loyalist Gerald Caplan, both of whom later dropped out.

But more important than the Waffle's content was its style. It was suffused with the energy (and arrogance) of the student movement of the late 1960s. Wafflers were determined to contest what they regarded

as the tired old shibboleths of the parliamentary NDP. Their nationalism (and hence their suspicion of international unions) did not endear them to Canada's labour leaders.

In April 1971, Waffle leader Jim Laxer challenged Stephen Lewis's father, David, for the leadership of the federal party. To the consternation of the party establishment, Laxer placed a strong second. The Ontario election a few months later was marked by infighting between Wafflers and other New Democrats. Finally, in early 1972, Stephen Lewis decided to make his move against a faction which, to him, had become a party within the party. That March, he launched a blistering attack on the Waffle. An investigation into the faction was ordered by the party's Ontario executive. At a meeting of the NDP Provincial Council in Orillia that summer, the issue came to a head. Whether the Waffle was purged, as its adherents charged, or whether it simply chose martyrdom over compromise, the result was the same. The faction was, to all intents and purposes, eliminated from the Ontario NDP.

Individual Wafflers, such as economist Mel Watkins and Laxer, drifted back into the margins of the party (Laxer later drifted out again). But the intellectual focus provided by the Waffle, a focus which allowed the NDP to challenge the increasingly conservative ideology of North American society, was gone. There would still continue to be a left caucus within the NDP. But increasingly it would become marginalized, discounted by the majority of the party as a refuge for Trotskyists and malcontents.

Instead, the Ontario party attempted to latch on to some of the concerns popular with an urban electorate. Lewis campaigned furiously against urban development of farmland in Southern Ontario and clear-cut logging in Northern Ontario, policies which probably won the NDP few friends in northern and rural areas but which were popular in downtown Toronto ridings. More importantly, he focused public attention on occupational health and safety.

With the trade unions still unable to deliver their members at election time, the NDP became increasingly concerned with courting single-issue voters. Anyone with any beef against any government could be sure to have a friend in the NDP. It supported residents east of Toronto who didn't want a second international airport built in their region. It supported residents west of Toronto who didn't want the existing international airport expanded. And it supported aircraft workers who wanted anything built that would increase the demand for airplanes. It

supported environmentalists who wanted the province rid of pop in cans. And it supported Hamilton steelworkers who made, and wanted to keep making, those cans. It supported anti-nuclear activists, determined to shut down the province's atomic generating stations, and it supported the unions whose workers were employed at these stations. It supported small business, while at the same time calling for a steep hike in the minimum wage, the policy that small-business owners hated most. As the NDP accelerated its drive to attract interest groups, its vinyl-covered policy binder—the pride and joy of members who believed their party alone had a real program—became a bewildering array of contradictory resolutions.

On the broader front, however, the NDP had increasingly less and less to say. Public auto insurance remained a bulwark. The party talked vaguely of an industrial strategy and of developing secondary industry in the North. But since Ontario remained prosperous during the 1970s and 1980s, and since the party's own polls showed that voters didn't trust it with money matters, the lack of a clear economic program caused the NDP little concern. More worrisome was the party's continuing inability to get elected.

In 1975, the Ontario NDP had become the official opposition again. In part, this was the result of fortuitous vote splits. But, in part, it was believed to be the result of the party's new, moderate, interest-group approach. When the minority Tory government finally fell in 1977, many in the party were convinced that their chance had come. "People firmly believed we'd form the government," said David Reville, who later became an MPP himself.

However, the ensuing 1977 election was a psychological disaster for the NDP—in Reville's words, a "huge disappointment." The party dropped only five seats in the legislature; but it lost its coveted status as official opposition. Lewis, who was deemed to have erred during the campaign by downplaying party policies in order to appear more moderate, resigned. Looking for a replacement, the party establishment and the trade unions gathered behind Hamilton MPP Ian Deans.

Meanwhile, the left, including ex-Waffler Jim Laxer, united behind Ottawa MPP Michael Cassidy, a former financial journalist accurately described by NDP historian Desmond Morton as a "decent, utterly uncharismatic figure, quite unable to rally the party's dispirited membership." A Cassidy victory seemed so improbable, recalled Charlotte Montgomery, at the time a *Toronto Star* reporter covering Queen's Park,

that many union delegates simply didn't bother showing up to vote.

But to the surprise and horror of the NDP leadership, Cassidy managed to beat out Deans. For many in the party, the Cassidy period was a bad dream, an interregnum best forgotten.

Another election defeat in 1981, this time involving the loss of twelve seats, gave the party a chance to end the interregnum. Cassidy resigned as leader. From inside the caucus, Richard Johnston emerged as the candidate of the left. The charming, twice-married Johnston, who had succeeded Lewis as MPP for Scarborough West, was opposed by Port Arthur MPP Jim Foulds.

However, Lewis and the party leadership weren't satisfied. What was needed, they felt, was a candidate who was firmly on the moderate wing of the party but who possessed a personality that could appeal to the media. And who better than Bob Rae, the federal caucus finance critic, a man whose one-liners brought joy to the Ottawa press corps?

In 1981, over dinner at the home of *Toronto Star* reporter Rosemary Speirs, Lewis, Michele Landsberg, Gerry Caplan, and labour lawyer Howard Goldblatt pressured Rae to run. Initially, he had been reluctant. A group from Ontario, including MPP Dave Cooke, had already journeyed to Ottawa to woo him, and at first Rae had refused. After all, he was doing well in Ottawa, was comfortable with federal issues, and saw himself as a potential successor to federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent.

By the time of the Toronto dinner, Rae was more amenable to the idea of tackling the Ontario leadership. Appealing to a combination of duty and vanity, Lewis and the others made their points: Rae had to enter the race to save the Ontario party; the most important provincial component of the NDP needed someone who was thoughtful, committed, impressive, interesting, and a good communicator. Moreover, Broadbent might hang on for a long time, denying Rae a chance at the federal leadership. And the most important point: after four decades in power, the Ontario Tories were ripe for a fall; the provincial Liberals were nowhere; with the right leader, the NDP was almost sure to form the government.

This time, the party and union establishment were not prepared to risk a Cassidy-style upset. With the support of the Lewises and labour leaders such as Canadian Auto Workers chief Bob White, Rae quickly became the front runner. He was also an impressive candidate. Janet Solberg, who as an Ottawa riding association president had been charged with dragooning delegates into Rae's camp, remembered him

as being "head and shoulders above the others." Rae won the leadership handily. All he needed was a seat in the legislature.

However, a strong streak of parochialism runs through Queen's Park. The victory of this glib outsider had left a residue of bitterness. Many New Democrat MPPs never accepted Rae's victory. Initially, no one would resign his or her seat to accommodate the new leader. The two MPPs whose ridings overlapped Rae's federal constituency refused point blank. For eleven months, the new NDP leader remained outside the legislature, fuming. Only when the ever-loyal Donald MacDonald agreed to resign from his seat in Toronto's York South riding was Rae able to enter the Ontario legislature as a sitting MPP.

It was not Ottawa. In the world of Ontario provincial politics, Rae's father, family, and federal Liberal connections counted for nothing. There were no wrinkled retainers to welcome him home, no statesman-like journalists appropriately respectful of his academic credentials. The more down-home reporters of Queen's Park were more likely to ask the new NDP leader why he thought he was so smart. In Ottawa, Rae's one-liners had headed the evening television news. At Queen's Park, they often fell flat. In the legislature, back-bench Tories in loud suits mocked him mercilessly.

Inside his own caucus, the new leader had few friends. His social awkwardness kept him aloof from his more sybaritic colleagues. For, by the 1980s, the opposition New Democrats had become party animals. At gatherings, Toronto MPP David Warner (later Speaker of the Legislature) might climb on top of a television set to do Al Jolson imitations. From time to time, a handful of members (two of whom later became senior cabinet ministers) would repair to the apartment of one of their number to smoke marijuana.

And they partied. In 1989, after one particularly raucous evening, Toronto MPP David Reville was persuaded to let an inebriated out-of-town colleague sleep it off on his living-room couch. Wakened in the middle of the night by a loud noise, Reville looked out his window. His caucus mate—who would later be named a cabinet minister—was standing on Reville's front porch, clad only in his underwear, urinating down the steps.

The division between leader and caucus extended beyond play. Richard Johnston and Oshawa MPP Mike Breugh had never accepted Rae's leadership. Johnston became a focal point for internal opposition and, until he quit the legislature in 1990, delighted in mau-mauing Rae.

Bud Wildman, an intense member from the northern riding of Algoma, took no pains to hide his ambition or his disapproval of Rae (Wildman would say later that it was only in government that he came to truly appreciate his leader). Even Floyd Laughren, who later became a Rae loyalist, admitted it took him some time to get to like his leader. “Bob never enjoyed the luxury of working with a caucus that liked him,” Rae’s press aide, Rob Mitchell, said later.

The 1985 election, the first under the new leader, eroded Rae’s stature further. In spite of their bright, new, media-wise leader, the NDP had once again come in third. Moreover, the biggest gains had been racked up by David Peterson’s Liberals.

David Peterson! Many in the NDP had only contempt for the soft-spoken London businessman. Rae thought him intellectually thin and made little attempt to hide this opinion. Indeed, to most political watchers at Queen’s Park, Peterson seemed a most unlikely person to bring the Liberals to office after forty-two years in opposition. Pleasant but dull, he was an indifferent speaker and, in the legislature, a lacklustre opposition leader. But behind the scenes, Peterson and his team had reformed the Liberals from a rural Grit rump into an urban vote machine. In the mid-1980s, the handsome, greying Peterson—the sleeves of his snowy white shirt rolled up, his red tie loosened—seemed to capture the mood of Ontario.

What is often forgotten is that David Peterson’s Liberals didn’t win in 1985. They placed second. Frank Miller’s Tories, while not winning a majority, picked up more votes than any other party. In normal times, the Conservatives would have formed a minority government. This would have lasted until the opposition parties combined to force another election. Thanks to the frustrations within the NDP, these were not normal times.

David Reville was a fledgling New Democrat MPP in 1985. An active and popular downtown Toronto alderman, Reville had grown up in a privileged family. After attending Upper Canada College, a private school, he had followed the normal route of members of the Toronto elite—Trinity College at the University of Toronto, and then law school. After that, it was assumed, Reville would follow in the footsteps of his father, a judge. But somewhere along the track, Reville derailed. At law school, he tried to kill himself. At age twenty-two, he was declared a manic depressive and locked up in a psychiatric hospital. Later, after he was out, Reville became a plumber, a crusader for mental health, and a

member of the NDP. As he explained to Canadian Press reporter Beth Gorham in 1989: “I became a New Democrat because I was mentally ill.” What he meant, Reville explained later, was that, as a mental patient, he had finally understood what it was to have no power. And he wanted to change a system that kept so many people powerless.

Coming from the raucous but fairly straightforward world of Toronto city politics into the dark and Byzantine manoeuvrings of the Ontario NDP caucus was an eye-opener for Reville. Many in the caucus felt they had been cheated twice from government. They wanted to form a coalition with the Liberals—supporting Peterson in exchange for cabinet posts. Another group wanted the party to follow normal practice and give conditional support to the Conservatives, who, after all, had gained a plurality of the vote. Yet another faction wanted the NDP to support neither, to let matters unfold day by day.

At the same time, there were the usual post-election recriminations: Whose fault was it that the NDP had not done better? In caucus, Johnston was sniping at Rae; Laughren and Wildman were slugging it out over who would get the post, coveted by northern members, of natural resources critic. “Laughren and Wildman hated each other,” Reville later recalled.

Underneath, two forces were at play. First, there was the desire for power. The NDP caucus had not so much a coherent agenda as a set of specific, single-issue agendas—from environmental protection to pay equity. Members were frustrated by years in opposition; they wanted a chance to put their ideas into practice.

Second, there was a debate over which of the old-line parties was the real enemy. It had been NDP folklore that the Liberals were the true scoundrels. Under Stephen Lewis’s leadership, the party’s overall strategy had been to attack the Liberals, displace them, and consign them to the oblivion they seemed to so richly deserve.

But a newer generation of New Democrats found the Tories more odious than the Liberals. The caucus research office, for instance, was impressed by stands the Liberals were taking on matters such as the environment. To these people, continued support of the fossilized Conservative regime, particularly under a right-of-centre premier such as Frank Miller, seemed anathema.

Rae was more sympathetic to the Liberals. But he was unsure about coalition. As a student of history, he understood the dangers of allowing one political party to be subsumed inside another. At a caucus meeting,

members were polled. Coalitionists were strong but did not form a majority. Rae liked the idea of coalition. But, according to Johnston, initially at least, Rae stayed on the fence. To Johnston, this was classic example of Rae's inability to seize the moment. To Reville, it was another example of the insanity of the caucus he had just joined: "I didn't know what to make of it; I was just astounded by it; I found the whole thing bizarre. We had absolutely no information on other coalition governments, how they had worked or not worked. I asked people about that and they just said, 'Never mind.'"

In any case, coalition soon became moot. The party leadership, including Stephen Lewis, had gotten wind of the scheme. To Lewis and federal leader Ed Broadbent, formal coalition was a prescription for the political suicide of the NDP.

With the coalition option removed, the caucus embraced the next-best thing—the idea of a political accord. The notion of a written contract—committing the New Democrats to support whichever party promised to implement the NDP's policy prescriptions—appealed to Rae's legalistic mind. It also appealed to union leaders in the party. Rae announced his caucus would be taking bids from the Liberals and Conservatives. But as journalist Rosemary Speirs has chronicled in *Out of the Blue*, her book on the end of the Tory regime, the NDP was never interested in a deal with the Conservatives. Rae himself felt it was important to put an end to Conservative rule. A deal, brokered by the NDP member Ross McClellan and Peterson's key aide, Hershell Ezrin, was soon signed.

Much later, Rae would brag about how the two-year accord allowed him to "bring in reform with the Liberals." But in 1987, the direst warnings of the pessimists seemed to have been borne out. True, the NDP's social agenda had dominated the Peterson government's first term. Laws putting in place such path-breaking programs as pay equity for women were passed under NDP pressure. Indeed, the NDP was able to put into place more of its agenda in two short years than ever before. Ironically, the NDP also put more of its agenda into place with the Liberals governing than it did later during its own time in power.

However, the New Democrats got no credit. Ontarians thanked Peterson instead. When the next election came in 1987, Peterson's Liberals were swept back into government with the largest majority in provincial history. The NDP, while hanging on to official-opposition status, was cut back from twenty-three to nineteen members. Even McClellan, a key architect of the accord, lost his seat.

To many in the NDP, the 1987 election result was a devastating political indictment of the decision to prop up the Liberals. The New Democrats had created a monster; mumbling, ineffectual David Peterson had been transformed by power into one of Ontario's most popular premiers. "Bob came out of the election really low," veteran NDP campaign organizer Sharon Vance said later.

Those New Democrat MPPs remaining gnashed their teeth and calculated pension benefits, trying to determine when would be the best time to leave politics. Oshawa MPP Mike Breough was the first to go, leaving in 1990 to enter federal politics. By midsummer, Richard Johnston and David Reville had decided not to run again. Johnston was sick of it; Reville wanted to do something useful. Even Floyd Laughren was preparing to leave after nineteen years in politics. Peterson had already offered him a job should the Liberals win the next election. (The only reason Laughren didn't quit in 1990, he said later, was that the election was called before he had time to do so.) Rae's principal secretary, Robin Sears, who had masterminded the 1987 campaign, had already left to take a plum patronage post offered by the Liberals.

Meanwhile, Rae seemed increasingly out of touch with daily politics. Already, he had been hit by twin tragedies. In 1985, a few months after the election, Arlene Perly Rae's parents were killed in a car crash. In 1989, Rae's younger brother, David, died, after a two-year fight against lymphatic cancer.

The death of Al and Hannah Perly had devastated their daughter. Lenny Wise would later recall being telephoned at midnight by Rae. His parents-in-law were dead, he told Wise, and Arlene, dazed with grief, had disappeared. "It was just absolute craziness," said Wise later. "We had to drive off and try to find her, me and Bob. . . . Everyone's driving all over the place and it's just like craziness." Arlene would later tell *Toronto Star* reporter Judy Steed: "I lost three years out of my life."

Meanwhile, nothing was getting better at Queen's Park. The death of Tommy Douglas in 1986 had shaken Rae. The young NDP leader had known Douglas in Ottawa and had regarded him as a mentor. An aide later remembered Rae in tears. "Tommy always advised me not to run for the Ontario leadership," Rae was saying between sobs. "And he was right."

As the pressure grew, Robin Sears began to make increasing use of Rae's old friend Wise: "Robin used to call me in," recalled Wise. "[He'd] say, 'Lenny, you got to get him [out of here].' And I understood what he meant because he [Rae] would be wiggling out. He'd be acting

crazy. The pressure would be getting to him and he'd be starting to act strange. . . . Robin would say 'Just take him out of here; take him for a walk; make him laugh. . . .' He always wanted to go to the cafeteria, for some reason, to get an egg sandwich. . . . An egg sandwich and a glass of milk was his obsession; that was all he ever seemed to eat. And we would go for a walk. Just to get away. And I would make him laugh. And he would forget for a moment. That was basically my job."

At Christmas 1987 came another crisis. This time it was Rae's brother, David. Bob Rae got the news of his brother's illness by telephone while on holiday in Florida with Arlene and his friends the Wises. "He was crying on the phone," said Wise. "He was telling me he [David] was finished."

For Bob Rae, the slow deterioration and death of his brother was a wrenching experience. In an attempt to arrest David's cancer, Bob underwent a painful bone marrow transplant operation. Even that did not work. The sickness and eventual death of his younger brother seemed to make Rae more pensive, more withdrawn. The NDP leader began to concentrate his mental energies on the plight of those he saw as truly dispossessed, Native people and urban black immigrants.

According to Rob Mitchell, it was during this period that Toronto black activists, such as Dudley Laws and Lennox Farrell, began to have more influence with Rae. Their arguments—that Ontario society was systemically racist—seemed to appeal to him. Evidence showed up in small ways. In one instance, Mitchell recommended that Rae be wary of involving himself in the controversy surrounding the police shooting of a Mississauga black teenager. Rae was a cautious man, and normally this kind of advice would have reflected his own instincts. But the new Rae had become more aggressive. "You're racist," he snapped at his press aide.

Aides joked that they could tell where Rae's focus was by the pictures on his office wall. If they were of Martin Luther King Jr., he was thinking black; if Native art, he was thinking Indian. A 1989 trip to some of the grim aboriginal settlements on the James Bay coast convinced him that Indians did indeed live in a form of colonial servitude. Later that year, Rae made a decision to get himself arrested along with Indians and environmentalists opposed to the logging of old-growth forests near the Northern Ontario town of Temagami. He was indeed arrested. But, unlike some of the other protestors, who faced jail and fines, he was never charged.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, Rae travelled to Lithuania (the original home of his grandfather Willy Cohen) to view firsthand the travails of yet another nationality struggling to escape what he would later call the "jackboot" of colonialism. "Bob's a black Lithuanian now," his aides would say.

Back in his office, Rae would peck away at a word processor, trying to put these disparate thoughts into the written form that would eventually become "What We Owe Each Other." In particular, he tried to link individual love—the feeling people have for each other—with socialism, as a form of institutionalized mutual caring. More hard-edged New Democrats blanched whenever Rae would bring up the topic; reporters were prone to sneer. During one trip with the press, Rob Mitchell was horrified to see Rae's briefcase fly open and Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*, a pop-psychology book, spill out. Mitchell quickly pounced to recover the book before any reporter could see it.

In 1989, Ed Broadbent resigned as federal NDP leader. Suddenly Rae had a way out of what, for him, had become the Appalachian backwater of Ontario politics. Rae's principal secretary, Robin Sears, urged him to try for Broadbent's job. Also supporting a Rae candidacy were the pillars of the NDP establishment—Bob White, Leo Gerard, Stephen Lewis, Gerry Caplan, Janet Solberg, Michael Lewis, former Saskatchewan premier Allan Blakeney, Roy Romanow, Manitoba NDP leader Gary Doer, and Nova Scotia NDP chief Alexa McDonough.

Only David Agnew was reluctant. Agnew had worked with Rae in Ottawa and by 1989 was one of his more trusted aides. If Rae took over the federal party, Agnew warned, the expectations would be enormous. He couldn't hope to live up to them. It would be like Ontario in 1982 all over again; he would be trashed.

Besides, Rae was told, he might not even win the federal crown. Western New Democrats wanted one of their own. Former B.C. premier Dave Barrett was thinking of entering the race. If he did so, and took votes from labour delegates, he could spoil it for Rae. Stephen Lewis was dispatched to try to persuade Barrett not to run. He failed.

By October, speculation about Rae's future had reached a crescendo. Most in the caucus were sure he was going to go. On his way to north-western Ontario to address a meeting of Indian chiefs, Rae suddenly decided he had to make up his mind. He called an emergency caucus meeting and headed back to Toronto.

Assembling in the opposition caucus room of Queen's Park on the

night of October 5, NDP members awaited Rae's return with some anticipation. Johnston, Wildman, and Ruth Grier were already planning their campaigns for the Ontario leadership. Wildman and Grier were also secretly investigating the idea of a deal to support each other against Johnston in any leadership convention.

But Rae was late. His airplane had run into bad weather. The extra time, as he explained later, gave him time to think and rethink. By the time he reached Queen's Park, Rae was ready to announce his decision. He would stay in provincial politics.

Reporters outside the caucus room heard a ragged cheer. But when the members emerged, their faces said it all. Wildman was particularly grim; Johnston had left by a back door; only Grier seemed genuinely pleased. The New Democrat MPPs again cheered, but with little enthusiasm, their leader's decision to stay on.

While Rae grappled with his own demons, little else was happening in the NDP caucus. By 1990, most MPPs had become cynical and dispirited. Rather than attempt to cobble together coherent positions, they had concentrated almost exclusively on scoring political points in the media. Faced with a choice between working the issues or working scandals, they chose scandals.

"I thought we were posturing just for the sake of posturing—just obstructing," said Richard Johnston later. "We were living off the battles of the CCF of earlier generations. No one was examining what we believed in. . . . I don't know exactly when, but at some point, we lost it. You have to believe in something, or you've lost it. And we lost it."

Even Rae supporters such as David Reville felt a similar malaise: "I was health critic," said Reville later. "I was pressured to scream at the government because a woman had to go to Buffalo to have her baby delivered because of complications. Actually, I thought it appropriate she went to Buffalo rather than have Ontario spend millions putting special obstetrical equipment in all our hospitals. I tried to resist that pressure, but you couldn't. . . . I had to worry that Ernie Eves [the Tory health critic] might get ahead of me. He might ask a question in the legislature about some fat executive who didn't get his triple heart bypass on the same day. What should I do then? Should I attack the government too?"

Most of the time he, and other members, did attack the government. The standard opposition position—any enemy of the government is a friend of mine—was accelerated. In concert with religious

fundamentalists, the NDP fought the idea of allowing stores to open on Sunday. On health policy, it supported both expanding hospital services and reducing them in favour of community-care alternatives. On auto insurance, it supported lower rates, public ownership, and the right of accident victims to sue, without bothering to see how the three could tie together. Too often, it wound itself into knots, simultaneously supporting contradictory positions that could not work together—at least not without more thought than the NDP caucus was willing to give.

"It was the desperation of an opposition party," said Reville three years later, when, as a senior aide to Premier Bob Rae, he reflected on his past. "I think you get captured in opposition, just like in government. . . .

"This was a small group of people who had had good intentions and spent their lives trying to make things fair. But we didn't have a fucking idea what it meant. We had the passion and theory. But we didn't have a fucking idea how to make things work. And we still don't."