

Name: Hatfield, Richard Bennett (Hon.)

Riding: Carleton, County of Carleton Centre, Riding of

Party: Progressive Conservative

Date Elected: BY-EL 19 Jun. 1961. GE 22 Apr. 1963. GE 23 Oct. 1967. GE 26 Oct. 1970. GE 18 Nov. 1974. GE 23 Oct. 1978. GE 12 Oct. 1982.

Positions Held: Leader of the Official Opposition, Autumn 1967 - 12 Nov. 1970. Leader of New Brunswick Progressive Conservative Party, 14 Jun. 1969 - 14 Oct. 1987. Premier of New Brunswick, 12 Nov. 1970 - 27 Oct. 1987. Appointed Acting Minister of Natural Resources, Jul. 1984 - 13 Feb. 1985. Appointed to the Queen's Privy Council, 17 Apr. 1982. Appointed to the Senate of Canada, 7 Sept. 1990.

Cabinet Shuffle:

Retired: Retired from provincial politics following his electoral defeat in Oct 1987.

Defeated: GE 13 Oct. 1987.

Died: Died of a cancerous brain tumour at the age of 60 on 26 Apr. 1991. Buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Hartland, NB.

Notes: Born on 9 Apr. 1931, in Woodstock, NB. The son of Heber Hatfield, a former mayor of Hartland and a Member of Parliament from 1940 to 1952, Richard Bennett Hatfield was exposed to politics since his earliest childhood. At the age of seven he attended his first political convention. While visiting his father on Parliament Hill at the age of ten, Hatfield clumsily spilled an inkwell on the papers of future Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. It seems little wonder that young Hatfield would enter politics, although, he would later reminisce that his father, just prior to his death in 1952, actually discouraged his son from entering public life.

In addition to his political career, Hatfield's father operated a potato business and was the largest employer in the community. Hatfield grew up firmly entrenched in the upper middle class, and was sent to the prestigious Rothesay Collegiate School near Saint John. Hatfield then graduated with a B.A. from Acadia University in Wolfville, NS, in 1952. Deciding upon a career in criminal law, Hatfield enrolled at Dalhousie University, and received his L.L.B. in 1956. The Dalhousie Law School of that period was a veritable who's who of future politicians. Hatfield's roommate was Alex Campbell, future premier of P.E.I., and he became good friends with John Crosbie. Upon his admittance to the Bar of Nova Scotia the same year, Hatfield practiced law in Truro, NS, for about six months.

Hatfield next went to Ottawa to become executive assistant to the then-federal Minister of Trade and Commerce, Gordon Churchill. He held the position from 1957 to 1958 when he returned to Hartland. From 1958 to 1966 Hatfield was sales manager of Hatfield Industries, the potato chip business inherited from his father.

When former Premier Hugh John Flemming (q.v.) retired from provincial politics, a seat was left vacant in Carleton County and Hatfield was successful in the by-election held in 1961. When asked later in life what had prompted him to enter politics, Hatfield answered simply, ""People."" He would be elected in every consecutive provincial election until 1987.

In 1966 Hatfield ran for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party. In the contest his more subdued campaign was pitted against the hellfire politics and vicious personal attacks of the eventual victor J.C. Van Horne (q.v.). When Van Horne failed to win a seat in the 1967 general election, Hatfield became the Leader of the Opposition in his absence. By 1967 Hatfield was in effect the de facto Leader of the Progressive Conservatives, but the title did not become permanent until his election as such at a 14 Jun. 1969 convention.

In possession of a colourful personality, but often shy of the media, Hatfield was never smoothly eloquent on television or during campaigns, preferring instead more intimate, one-on-one conversations in which he could better articulate his ideas. Nevertheless, in the general election of 1970, Hatfield mounted a strong campaign

emphasizing the need for a change in government and successfully led his Conservatives to victory over Louis J. Robichaud's Liberals on election day. On 12 Nov. 1970 Hatfield, the thirty-nine year-old bachelor was sworn in as Premier. In short time he would become revered and reviled in equal measure, and, without question, one of the province's most colourful Premiers with his unpredictable devil-may-care attitude. One of the most respected politicians in Canada, his many accomplishments came both in New Brunswick and the Atlantic region, and on the national stage.

Upon assuming office in 1970, Hatfield immediately proclaimed several remaining Equal Opportunity legislation left inexplicably idle and without royal assent by the departing Robichaud administration. Hatfield did more for the equality of Anglophone and Francophone New Brunswickers than any other politician before or since. His government implemented the Official Languages Act, thus making New Brunswick the only officially bilingual province in the country. With the help of his French Lieutenant, Jean Maurice Simard (q.v.), Hatfield did much to increase political recognition to Acadians and solidifying their relationship to Anglophones. He was supportive in helping to establish cultural institutions, such as the Village historique Acadien and the Centre Marin de Shippagan, to preserve and strengthen Acadian culture. Furthermore, the Premier ensured minority language education throughout the province with school board reform and the construction of several centres scolaires-communautaires. In 1977 Hatfield was responsible for New Brunswick joining the Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie. Throughout his career, Hatfield tried nobly to learn to speak French himself, and, although he was terrible at it, he earned respect from the Acadian community for his effort. After his death he was awarded the Leger Comeau medal from la Société Nationale de l'Acadie for his many contributions.

Within New Brunswick Hatfield was also a leader in the promotion of the rights of other minorities. He created the Youth Council of New Brunswick, the Premier's Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and the Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons as government initiatives in this direction. He later became Director of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, and was awarded the Canada-Israel Friendship Award (1973). He would also receive the title Chief Rolling Thunder as an honour from the Micmac-Maliseet Nations (1970), and a member of the Aboriginal Order of Canada (1985) in recognition of his efforts for their community. By the end of his second term in office he had received honorary degrees from the Université de Moncton (1971), University of New Brunswick (1972), Saint Thomas University (1973), Mount Allison University (1975), and Nova Scotia's Université Sainte-Anne.

He was similarly dedicated to promoting New Brunswick arts and culture. In 1975 he established New Brunswick Day as an annual holiday in celebration of the province's history. Similarly, as a part of the Bi-Centennial celebrations in 1984 he unveiled New Brunswick's new coat of arms. He is credited with establishing the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Arts, and for many years was Chairman of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton. A bon vivant in his personal life, Hatfield numbered countless painters, poets, actors and musicians among his acquaintances, including Alden Nowlan and Stompin' Tom Connors. With his personal style and refined taste, he was probably the only Premier to possess a true understanding of the arts. Throughout his life he remained a staunch supporter of local and Canadian artists, and was calling for more federal funding for the arts even as he lay on his deathbed. He was also noted as being very involved with his community. In this respect he was particularly associated with the New Brunswick Division of the Canadian Red Cross Society, and the provincial division of the Boy Scouts of Canada.

During his long tenure as Premier, Hatfield also instituted several profound political reforms in New Brunswick. In the late 1970s he implemented a tough new Elections Act to rid the province of its patronage-ridden reputation. The measure introduced strict regulations concerning party financing. The new legislation also split New Brunswick's archaic multi-member county ridings into single-member constituencies in order to provide citizens a more democratic voice in government.

In discussing federal equalization payments Hatfield once said: "Minorities are not only linguistic and cultural; they're economic and regional." Thus, Hatfield did not limit himself only to affairs within his province, but played a leading role in fostering cooperation between governments throughout Atlantic regions for their mutual benefit. His administration helped found the Council of Maritime Premiers, and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. In addition, Hatfield sought greater relations for New Brunswick with Quebec, Maine and other New England states.

Finally, Hatfield became as important a national figure as he was within the province. He was, in Dalton Camp's words, "the most influential of our premiers in the area of federal-provincial relations." From his attendance at

the Victoria Constitutional Conference in 1971 to the Meech Lake Accord in 1987, Hatfield was actively dedicated to the promotion of national unity. In constitutional issues, he was Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's greatest ally among provincial premiers. He was particularly instrumental during negotiations towards patriation of the Canadian Constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. At Hatfield's behest, a right to minority language education was included in Section 23 of the Constitution. At his insistence, a clause relating to equalization payments was also included. In appreciation of his support of constitutional renewal and his leadership role in the final negotiations, Hatfield was honoured by being sworn into the Queen's Privy Council on 17 Apr. 1982. Furthermore, Hatfield also strongly urged the amendment of Canada's Indian Act, to give full rights of citizenship to the country's aboriginal women. In one gaffe during this period, Hatfield boldly stated that if the Crown did not consent to the proposed Constitution, Canada ought to give up the monarch. The comment would forever overshadow Hatfield's avowed monarchist leanings.

Despite his national profile, Hatfield strongly stated he was never interested in entering federal politics: "I can do more nationally from this office, far more, than from any other job I can think of." Furthermore, Hatfield concluded: "To go from being the premier of a province to being a federal cabinet minister is a demotion."

Hatfield was re-elected four times and was in office for seventeen years, making him the New Brunswick's longest serving Premier. In a 1979 interview Hatfield spoke about his love for his job: "What do you do after this? There's nothing I can think of that's as interesting or exciting as being premier of New Brunswick."

It was perhaps natural that with such a long tenure in office, Hatfield would have his share of failures. Early in his premiership, the province invested in the Bricklin, an impressive sportscar with gull-wing doors, to be built in New Brunswick. By 1975 the failed venture went into receivership at a \$23 million loss to the government coffers. By his own admission, Hatfield was a hands-off Premier who could see the big picture and important issues, but often neglected the day-to-day operations. His practice of leaving the mundane intricacies of running government he left to his cabinet resulted in a construction kickback scandal in 1977. Behind the Liberals in the polls by six points leading up to the election the following year, Hatfield's government seemed to be on the way out. But being "a superb electoral tactician with an uncanny knack for knowing how things will play in Petitcodiac," as one reporter commented, Hatfield used his personal charisma to propel his government to another mandate. In a less severe example of his lack of focus, by Hatfield's confession, he once appointed an entire cabinet but forgot to appoint a Finance Minister. The mistake was only discovered on the day of the swearing in, when one of the cabinet ministers received a surprise promotion.

In a eulogical column, Allan Fotheringham noted that Hatfield was probably the only Canadian politician "who did not separate his public persona from his private life." For this character flaw, Hatfield suffered a terrible price as a criticism of the politician was indubitably a criticism of the person. While his various personal peccadillos held only mild interest for the New Brunswick public for many years, he took almost constant lashing from the Opposition for his quixotic bachelor lifestyle and off-beat character. Hatfield treasured solitude and, while his front door was always open, he developed close friendships with few people. As his dear friend Alden Nowlan once said: "Richard Hatfield is probably the most emotionally self-sufficient person I know and immeasurably tougher than he first appears to be." A globe-trotter by nature, Hatfield traveled incessantly to New York, Boston, Montreal, Marrakech, Argentina, Israel and Iraq, but usually alone. He often slipped off from the province for weekends or brief vacations whenever the desire struck. Once when the Opposition discovered Hatfield had only been in the province for 168 days of that year, the Liberals grilled and berated the Premier. His friend Dalton Camp defended him: "Richard was elected to govern New Brunswick - no one said he had to live there." Well-known throughout the world, Hatfield frequented New York's Studio 54, and was possibly the only Canadian politician guaranteed an invite to Truman Capote's parties. In some ways Hatfield seemed too big to be bound by New Brunswick's borders. As political observer Stephen Kimber commented in 1979: "He is, in a sense, a politician of the world who just happens to come from New Brunswick."

It was well-known that Hatfield rarely showed up to work before 10 am and often went home early. Less known is that the premier continued to be consumed by politics through the night and into the next morning. More comfortable holding impromptu late night parties at his home than in caucus meetings, Hatfield often hosted artists, political colleagues and the press to discuss politics at his home. This brand of privately conducted politics worked exquisitely at the federal-provincial conferences and negotiations of the national scene where all the effective business is conducted behind closed doors. As time wore on, however, in New Brunswick rumours began to swirl about what exactly went on at these parties in the early 1980s. In 1985 allegations surfaced of a drug-filled party with a handful of university students that continued during a business trip to Montreal the next

day. The peak of controversy had come in 1984. When boarding the Queen's private plane during a royal visit, a small amount of marijuana was discovered in the Hatfield's carry-on luggage. The RCMP then arrested the Premier. He was charged with possession, but acquitted as a result of insufficient evidence. Rumours persisted that the drug had been planted, possibly by Pat Ryan, an ATV reporter. Throughout the scandal, Hatfield stood and faced his critics instead of running away. To those Hatfield said: "'I'm extremely gregarious....I admit I am unconventional.'" But the premier would never apologize for his personal character.

As a result of these scandals, by the 1980s, even Hatfield's most fervent supporters were having difficulty in explaining away his unpredictable behaviour. In the early 1980s Hatfield had weathered a short-lived movement within the Progressive Conservative Party to oust their Leader. But with the 1987 election looming, and their defeat a virtual certainty, members of his caucus began jumping ship to run as independents. Hatfield increasingly closed himself off from the media and public. It was half-way through the campaign that he even began granting interviews, and then only with selected journalists. In Dalton Camp's words, Hatfield had "'allowed himself the indulgence of staying around too long,'" and the New Brunswick public agreed. Finally exasperated with their playboy premier, on election day voters awarded all fifty-seven seats in the Legislature to Frank McKenna's Liberals. The dejected former premier called himself "'the biggest loser in provincial history.'"

Following his defeat, Hatfield served for a number of years as a Board Member of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. He also became Chairman of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton. In Sept. 1990 he was appointed to the Senate of Canada by then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Suffering from a cancerous brain tumour, Hatfield's health quickly began to decline. Yet he remained active. In 1991 he even met with young students at a model parliament being held in Fredericton. He died shortly afterward. In 2002 Hatfield was posthumously invested into the Order of New Brunswick by Queen Elizabeth II.

The province's love-hate relationship with Hatfield is perhaps revealed in the many names by which he was known. To his antagonists in the Opposition benches, he was known as Tricky Dick. By the sometimes hostile press, he was nicknamed Disco Dick. But to the French, he was referred to as l'Homme. And to New Brunswickers everywhere, he was simply Richard. In journalist Sandra Gwyn's appraisal, "'his character is elusive and contradictory, at times erratic, at times vital.'" Upon meeting Hatfield, the Dalai Lama astutely recognized a tragic persona and remarked "'that he had met few people with such a restless soul in search of a sturdy home.'"

For more information see also: "'The Premiers of New Brunswick'" (971.5 D754 NB Coll.); "'Richard Hatfield: power and disobedience'" (971.5104 H362e NB Coll.); "'Richard Hatfield, un dernier train pour Hartland'" (971.5104 H362 NB Coll.); "'Remembering Richard: an informal portrait of Richard Hatfield...'" (971.5104 R386 NB Coll.); "'Richard Hatfield: the seventeen year saga'" (971.504 H129St NB Coll.); "'In October 1970 you and I ...'" (329.9715 H362 NB Coll.); "'Say goodnight, Dick: a collection of Hatfield cartoons'" (741.5 B569S NB Coll.); "'Index to Richard Hatfield's speeches, 1968-1987'" (Ref 971.5104 I38); "'The History of New Brunswick Provincial Election Campaigns and Platforms, 1866-1974'" (329.023 W899 NB Coll.); Hugh Patrick Mellon, "'Political communications and government reform: New Brunswick under Richard Hatfield,'" Thesis (PhD): Queen's University, 1992 (971.5104 M527 NB Coll.); Sandra Gwyn, "'Hanging out with Hatfield,'" Saturday Night (Jan./Feb. 1979); Stephen Kimber, "'Richard Hatfield, politician,'" Atlantic Insight (Aug. 1979); Allan Fotheringham, "'In praise of Richard Hatfield,'" Maclean's (13 May 1991); Dalton Camp, "'Why Richard Hatfield was considered special,'" Telegraph-Journal (30 Apr. 1991); and the New Brunswick Pamphlet Collection.

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