

Peel Biog. Bk.

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Hyl Chappell an ardent Parliamentarian



Hyl Chappell, one-time MP for South Peel, remains active at his Toronto law practice. (Staff Photo by Tim Chevrier)

Best remembered as Liberal MP for South Peel during the early days of Trudeaumania, Hyliard Chappell recalls that his days in federal politics, while rewarding, were filled with frustration.

"I used to receive tremendously heavy mail," Chappell said recently. "I think in my four years, I must have received seven or eight thousand letters."

But Parliamentary procedure — hamstrung, Chappell says, by hours of useless debate — prevented the government from addressing all but a few of the concerns raised by his constituents.

"These delays are perhaps part of democracy, but I think there's too damn many of them," he says ruefully.

Chappell remains proud of his contributions during those years, especially his well-publicized support for government action against the then-active FLQ, and a campaign for revision of expropriation laws that contributed to the amendment of both federal and Ontario legislation.

what are they doing now?

Chappell also led a successful battle against a planned expansion of Toronto International Airport in 1968 that would have drowned thousands of Dixie-area residents in excess noise.

However, his slight disillusionment was perhaps natural, the flipside of the unrealistic, heady optimism of the late 1960s that inspired him to try federal politics in the first place.

"I think at that time a lot of Canadians felt there was going to be a breakthrough

and democracy was going to turn a corner."

And now? "I think, perhaps, we set out sights of achievement a little too high."

Deciding not to campaign for re-election when his term ended in 1972, Chappell has nevertheless toyed several times with re-entering politics under the Liberal banner at the provincial level. Nothing more, though.

"I have a high regard for Stuart Smith personally, but I didn't see him getting in."

And rather than play on a losing team, Chappell decided to stick to the sidelines.

"I just didn't wish to be in opposition and I wouldn't be good at it. You've got to be a born critic."

However, he is still happily at the Toronto law practice he's run since 1949.

But, at 65, is he thinking of retiring?

"I take more holidays, but I'm still practising law," he said, laughing. "And enjoying it tremendously."

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CHAPPELL, Hyliard