

## Voice of the people

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### **Social democratic debut**

Ralph Surette's Feb. 21 column, "Fixing the Tory/NDP double standard," is a breath of fresh air and common sense. Premier Rodney MacDonald's attempts to rekindle such "residual rural legends" (written by Tory caucus staff and paid for by taxpayers) illustrate some of the finest traditions of 19th-century Nova Scotian politics. This would be lamentable at the best of times, but is particularly egregious when, south of the border, Barack Obama's administration is inspiring the entire planet with its sweeping new vision of how politics should be conducted – with truth, honesty, integrity and respect for its citizens.

I would add the following example to Surette's catalogue repudiating political stereotypes. Tommy Douglas's CCF government (the predecessor of the NDP) in Saskatchewan, the first social-democratic government elected in North America, stayed in the black for its entire term, 1944-48 and 1951-59. Between 1951 and '59, government revenues rose from \$63 million to \$143 million and while spending increased, the province stayed out of the red and net debt fell. Along the way, they created medicare, reformed education, increased the minimum wage, enshrined the right to collective bargaining, enhanced social welfare, provided farm security, established the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and introduced Canada's first Bill of Rights with protections for freedom of religion, speech, assembly and elections, and prohibitions against racial and religious discrimination. That's how social democracy in Canada made its debut.

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