Clockwise from upper left: Jim Aitchson, Helen MacDonald, Alexa McDonough, John Holm, Darrell Dexter, Maureen MacDonald, Robert Chisholm, Jeremy Akerman.
In the caucus meeting room hang photos of all of the provincial leaders, going back to Micki MacDonald in 1953. Then there is Jim Aitchison in 1962, Jeremy Akerman in 1968, Buddy MacEachern in 1980, Alexa McDonough in 1980, John Holm in 1994, Robert Chisholm in 1996, Helen MacDonald in 2000, and then Darrell Dexter in 2001. It has been a long run. While my focus here is on the period I know best, i.e., since 1998, the electoral leap forward that year came with specific antecedents, decades of hard work, and many struggles.

*Gauche caviar* is the French phrase; in English, it is "champagne socialist." The Americans have "limousine liberal." In other countries and languages there are equivalent terms. To some extent it implies hypocrisy, though not always. What it points to is a well-recognized phenomenon that those with ample education are often likely to favour an egalitarian society, even when they benefit themselves from positions of advantage and comfort in the *status quo*. There has always been something of a division inside the party in Nova Scotia between the university-based membership and the mostly Cape Breton working-class unionized membership. This certainly has evolved over the years, but for a long time was a fact of life for the dynamics of the party. Nor is it confined to Nova Scotia. It is a characteristic of the NDP throughout Canada, and of left parties throughout the world. It is far from obvious why even these distinctly...
different educational backgrounds should lead to tensions, though it is easy to see the focus of dispute when it comes to environmental matters. In Nova Scotia this has evolved around coal mining primarily, though its most modern manifestation has been around forestry and hence industrial policy in general.

One of my favourite MLAs was Paul MacEwan, one of the longest serving MLAs ever with 33 years in the Legislature. MacEwan started as an NDP MLA but later ran as an independent, as a representative of the Cape Breton Labour Party, and finally – when our times in the Legislature overlapped – as a Liberal. He was a scholar, and his book on the NDP in Nova Scotia during the time Jeremy Akerman was the leader, is a fine, detailed account of those years. It includes this retrospective, going back to the Farmer-Labour party.

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, or CCF, was set up in Nova Scotia in 1938 by the coal miners of District 26, United Mine Workers of America. It never really succeeded at breaking out beyond the steel and coal areas of industrial Cape Breton, although there it managed to have some representatives elected federally or provincially at all times between 1939 and 1963. The most noteworthy figure in the CCF successes in Cape Breton was Clarence Gillis, MP for Cape Breton South from 1940 to 1957. Provincially, the CCF elected one MLA in a 1939 by-election, three MLAs in 1941, two in 1945 and 1949 and one in 1956 and 1960. The members who served were Douglas MacDonald, Donald MacDonald, D. N. Brodie, Russell Cunningham and Michael MacDonald.

The CCF was badly mauled in the 1958 federal election and was reorganized into the New Democratic Party in 1961, under the national leadership of T. C. “Tommy” Douglas. In the federal election of 1962, the voters of Cape Breton South elected an NDP MP, Malcolm “Vic” MacInnis, but he was defeated in the 1963 election nine months later. This was the sum total of CCF and NDP successes in Nova Scotia until Jeremy Akerman came along.

Under Akerman, the NDP elected two MLAs in 1970, three in 1974 and four in 1978 to the Nova Scotia Legislature. Federally in 1974 and 1979 it elected Rev. Andy Hogan as MP for Cape Breton East Richmond, so that in 1978 and 1979, it had out-done anything electorally ever done under the CCF banner in terms of winning seats.
Beyond that, under Akerman, the NDP for the first time in Nova Scotian history put up a third-party candidate in every provincial riding in the province, on two occasions, first in 1974 and again in 1978. Statistics could be quoted to show percentage growth by riding, but without that it can be said that he built his party up a great deal.¹

Included in Appendix 1 are the Labour, CCF, and NDP votes and seats back to those years and for every election since then. MacEwan’s overview appears to be correct. Progress has been slow, including very barren years. Where MacEwan is also acute is on the nature of internal disputes in the NDP. He is inclined to emphasize a split between Cape Breton working-class oriented pragmatists and Halifax pipe-smoking academics more interested in ideological purity than in winning elections. Some of his figures are sobering: at one point, in the late 1960s, party membership was decidedly based in Cape Breton (713) compared with 259 for the rest of the province, only 94 of whom were in Halifax County and 100 in Pictou County. In recent decades the shift has been decidedly to Halifax both in terms of memberships and as a source of monetary support for the party, with the three Halifax Peninsula constituencies regularly and emphatically leading.

The time between the barren 1960s through to 1980 or so was largely a time of internal bickering. MacEwan describes it in painful detail. Still, MacEwan and Akerman were successful in being elected in 1970 and there followed a burst of NDP activity both in the Legislature and in terms of organization and publicity. Buddy MacEachern was to join the other two in the election of 1974, and then Len Arsenault in 1978.