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NEWS LOCAL

Shoemaker highlights Hearst on 'The Agenda'

By Elaine Della-Mattia, Sault Star

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Ward 3 Coun. Matthew Shoemaker will appear on The Agenda with Steve Paikin to talk about Sir William Hearst, Ontario's seventh Premier who hailed from Sault Ste. Marie.

Matthew Shoemaker admits he has a fascination with Sir William Hearst.

In his view, Hearst, Ontario's seventh premier who called Sault Ste. Marie his adopted home and spent almost a dozen in politics, hasn't been recognized for his contributions to the Ontario scene.

Many of the decisions made during Hearst's rein during World War 1 still impact Ontarians today, the Ward 3 city councillor states.

Ontarians know little about him and to Shoemaker, Hearst is “a victim of time” who has fallen through the cracks.

In 1908 Hearst was elected member for the Sault Ste. Marie riding and was appointed minister of forests and mines in 1911. He was sworn in as Premier on Oct. 2, 1914 where he served until 1919.

Shoemaker does his best to educate viewers of “The Agenda with Steve Paikin” in a soon-to-be-aired segment of the show.

The segment, called Remembering Sir William H. Hearst, was made available on The Agenda website to mark the 75th anniversary of the premier's death on Thursday.

It's not the first time Shoemaker has cheered for Hearst.

In 2015, Shoemaker penned a resolution, passed by city council, to call the August Civic Holiday Sir William H. Hearst Day in Sault Ste. Marie.

The self-proclaimed history buff said he sent Paikin a copy of a dated thesis written by Emeritus Professor Brian Tennyson of Cape Breton University's history department.

Tennyson also believes Hearst is the forgotten Premier.

“I guess the reality is that most of them are forgotten but in Hearst's case that is a little surprising because he held office during the First World War,” Tennyson said in an email to The Sault Star, responding to questions from England where he is working on another book.

Tennyson wrote the Hearst thesis for his MA degree in history at the University of Toronto where at the time, virtually nothing had been published on Hearst, he said.

After completing his thesis he continued publishing a number of articles about Hearst with the intent of publishing a book, something publishers were not interested in doing.

Now, Shoemaker has consulted with Tennyson and continuing his research on Hearst in the hopes of updating that thesis with information that is now available or more understandable through the context of time.

Tennyson said he's interested in the idea as long as Shoemaker does the legwork by finding a publisher and waits until his current book is completed.

“Matt has been very encouraging and enthusiastic but time will tell if this project will actually come to fruition,” the email read.

Meanwhile, Shoemaker is doing his best to highlight Hearst – and Tennyson said he's had some success doing just that.

Paikin contacted Shoemaker and invited him to be a guest on The Agenda to discuss Hearst's successes.

“I never anticipated I would be on the show but it was super fun,” Shoemaker said.

Shoemaker flew to Toronto – at his own expense – last Friday to tape the show and place a Sault Ste. Marie city flag on Hearst's grave at Mt Pleasant Cemetery.

Hearst was Ontario's seventh premier and first premier from Northern Ontario.

“The more I learned about him the more I realized how spectacular a career he really had,” Shoemaker says on the show.

Hearst was elected to Ontario's legislature in 1908 as Sault Ste. Marie's representative for the Conservative party in the election that saw every seat in Northern Ontario coloured blue.

During his time in politics, Hearst settled a dispute that set the Ontario – Manitoba border which ultimately gave Ontario a 56% expansion of its land mass, incorporating the now James Bay area.

His record also includes introducing a bill that limited miners working hours to eight hours a day, penned two bills on political contributions, passed the Worker's Compensation Act, gave women the right to vote and dealt with a highly-contentious Bilingual Schools Act and the creation of the Ministry of Labour.

Shoemaker says Hearst laid “groundbreaking legislation” during his time in office.

He was also responsible for one of the largest construction projects in the world at the time – The Chippewa Project – designed to generate hydro electric power from Niagara Falls. That project, which cost \$76 million, came in four times over budget and resulted in friction between Hearst and Ontario Hydro's executive at that time.

Hearst served as Ontario's premier from 1914-1919.

He was inducted into the Sault Ste. Marie Walk of Fame in 2013.

Shoemaker's appearance on The Agenda with Steve Paikin can be found online at <http://tvo.org/video/programs/the-agenda-with-steve-paikin/remembering-sir-william-h-hearst>.

A cable air-date for the segment has not yet been confirmed but it's expected to air in the next few weeks, Shoemaker said.

Tennyson said he's pleased Hearst is getting some recognition, especially in Sault Ste. Marie due to his connection here.



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