

# The Gateway

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## editorial

It's awful having to criticize the provincial government for being secretive and hypocritical and arrogant—but it seems so necessary these days, I wonder why Edmonton's sole daily doesn't often get around to it. Take, for instance, the gambit of the Social Credit party of Feb. 24 as the Legislature's Spring Session opened.

The Socreds asked that an opposition member chair a new committee on the Heritage Fund. Walt Buck (SC—Clover Bar) noted that in 1968 Peter Lougheed, then opposition leader, requested that opposition member chair the public accounts committee and also that the then Socred gov't. granted his wish. And, Buck argued, the PC cabinet already has exclusive control to decide behind closed doors how 80 per cent of the province's money will be used—it's now time to ensure "a real measure of accountability."

Did the motion pass? Not a chance. Why not? Lougheed said because the government should have exclusive privileges with investment monies as opposed to "public accounts," or operating expenditures. He didn't mention, however, that under Cabinet approval "investments" can take any form—from building hospitals and houses to putting money on the open market. It could even pay for a government minister, couldn't it, since his role is an "investment" in the future of the province? And so on.

Not only does such an act—blatant refusal to be held accountable for government actions with monies of the public trust—lay open the door to misuse and mismanagement of massive funds, it also allows the government to take most of the important regulatory powers away from our Legislature. If Lougheed invests some of the Heritage Trust fund by lending it to Nfld. it's a "Conservative move"—and becomes a Conservative "victory." If he invests it in a refinery project that goes bankrupt, Albertans hear nothing about it. So the Heritage Trust Fund becomes a political propaganda piece for the PCs. And often we aren't even allowed to see to what propaganda purposes our massive public monies are being used. That's democracy in action, isn't it?

And, of course, we all know by this time that the Lougheed gov't. is one of the tightest, most secretive provincial governments in Canada. It has to be in order to protect itself, I suppose. But some of us hope that with our economic prosperity and all, such a tight-lipped approach from people supposedly in the public service would change. Guess not, though. Just note the way PC members jumped on a motion by Ray Speaker (SC—Little Bow) which would have required the gov't. to (1) provide the Opposition with copies of ministerial statements at the same time as or before they are made; (2) include with gov't. bills all documents which justify the legislation; and (3) add an "explanatory memorandum" outlining the impact of the proposal.

Now it's true that such a motion is perhaps not the best way to ask for information from the government. Obviously it may lead to a lot of trivial or only partially significant material being passed to a few opposition members who would then be unable to assess it all. But as Walter Buck pointed out it *would* be a step towards opening the closed doors of the Lougheed administration. And just look at the specious arguments the government used to attack this motion.

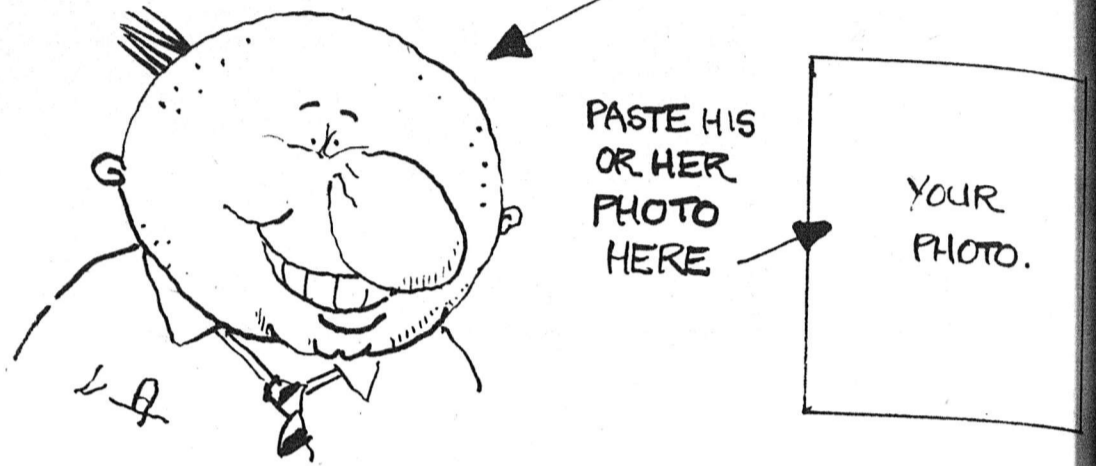
Don Getty (who must be an intelligent man—otherwise how did he get to be Energy Minister?) said it "defied parliamentary tradition." Getty said the Opposition should think up its own alternatives, not accept alternatives handed them by the government. A strange statement, considering the Bill had nothing to do with alternatives but with gov't procedures. Dave King (PC—Highlands) said the Opposition can no longer rely on the media to feed them questions and now want the government to give them those questions—when in fact all the Opposition wants are explanations for government moves. And so on (and on and on in true parliamentary tradition, as Getty might say).

Of course, at the end there was no dispute. With 69 votes to six, the PCs don't need logical arguments, only some old-fashioned rhetoric for the media boys. And with 69 votes and some rhetoric, they don't feel a need to be held accountable, either. So that when the public ask questions about native housing and the Alberta Development Corporation and the PWA operation and the Tar Sands development and environment standards and the differential fees, all our government has to do is feed us some more pablum and expect us to shut-up like satisfied infants. Will we?

by Kevin Gillese

WE INTERRUPT THIS CARTOON-STRIP TO PRESENT:  
 the WORLD'S FIRST ANNUAL CACTUS BLINS LOOK-A-LIKE CONTEST!

IF YOU KNOW ANYBODY WHO LOOKS LIKE THIS MAN...



... AND SEND IT TO THE GATEWAY ROOM 282, S.U.B.

The winning entry will appear in the Gateway.

DEADLINE: MARCH 25, 1977.

## But...

I would like to take exception to some of the comments, made by Gary Romanchuk, that were included with the written decision of DIE Board. (re: Feb. 11 General Election). He took exception to the fact that some ballots were repunched and referred into the computer.

The ballots were read by a card reader, which operates under purely arbitrary rules. Some people, who either didn't like or didn't understand preferential balloting, violated some of the card reader's rules (with multiple punches).

Even though the number of ballots thus punched was quite

small, (less than 50, I believe) I felt that it was unnecessary that a vote be lost if it could reasonably be determined who the voter wanted. Technically, these people had not voted correctly. However, whenever possible, these votes were re-submitted in a form acceptable to the card reader *only if the voter's intent was clear*. Sometimes a vote for one position might be lost, while the rest of the positions on the same ballot were properly marked. I felt that votes should not be lost on technicalities.

Contrary to what was written by Mr. Romanchuk, when a ballot was "unclear," it was not

repunched to remove ambiguities. It was repunched so that the intent, if clearly indicated, was more in line with card-reader rules. If a vote was ambiguous for one position on the ballot but not for other, repunching, this position would be left blank.

When a ballot was repunched, it was torn (to show it had been dealt with) and stored with the other ballots, in a sealed box. Anyone who wished could have arranged to see them.

Michael Amerongen  
 Returning Officer

## HUB girls fuming

In response to the previous Gateway articles about the HUB fire, we, the three girls trapped in the apartment above the blaze, would like this opportunity to rebut the advice that we should have "calmly stayed in our apartment" during the Feb. 16 fire.

First, the fire alarm rings, and we yawn at this regular occurrence. However, low and behold, when we open the door we see... SMOKE! Mayhaps there is a fire. Oh, no need to panic, we say to each other, the stairwell is made of cement; it won't burn. What should we do? Should we stay here and continue studying or sojourn through the fire escape door to the next apartment? Well, it's getting a little lazy in here; I think the lighting will be better next door. Sauntering calmly over to the fire door, we look at the instructions: "Break Glass."

Dutifully, we break the glass.

Oh oh, what a shame, the instructions were on the glass. What next? Oh, there's no need to worry, everyone knows that according to "test conditions, it takes one hour for the flames to come through the floor." (cough, cough, cough).

Don't panic, we'll rely on our memories; we've read the instructions many times before. Now we simply insert the key and pull — and pull — and pull! What is wrong? We discard the key and calmly begin to kick, thump, wrench and shove the door.

Perhaps the fact that this door pulls open explains why we are "unable to kick open the emergency panel to the adjoining apartment." "It's a good thing that the escape door is sealed so tightly that this smoke in our apartment won't bother our neighbours. Oh my, but the campfire atmosphere is getting a little thick in here. I suppose, due

to the fact that we need oxygen to breathe, there is no choice but to bolt down the stairwell.

It's a funny thing we discovered that night (hack, hack, cough, cough); where there's fire, there's SMOKE! (Remember most deaths occurring in fires result from suffocation because of smoke inhalation.)

"The girls above...  
 - author"

## Thanks

In blazing appreciation, all those who so thoughtfully gave in cash or in kind, and especially to Larry, whose fruitful efforts and generosity rekindled our spirits.

Azmina Hashmi  
 Mumtaz Karmali  
 Karen Pachol