

Where there's smoke,  
there's fire...

# the Gateway

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1981

...THERE REALLY  
IS A FIRE!!!

## Gateway News Service (GNS)

Tuesday evening, 18 Alberta MLAs drank liquor and ate hors d'oeuvres while students lobbied them on student and education issues.

Following is a collection of anecdotes provided by three *Gateway* reporters; Wes Oginski, Jordan Peterson, and Peter Hammond (Canadian University Press Fieldworker), who attended the event.

A roomful of politicians and students does not provide many cohesive conversations, but common issues were raised and discussed.

Ernie Isley, MLA Vegreville, challenged anyone to bring him a person who could not go to a post secondary institution because of financing. Until then, he will not accept that finances constitute an accessibility barrier to these institutions.

Two MLAs were asked for their reaction to the dependency clause in the Student Loan Program. Shirley Cripps, from Drayton Valley, originally agreed that the clause would cause undue hardships to students who weren't supported by their parents.

Isley entered this discussion, saying he justified the clause. He said it was not the provincial government's responsibility to underwrite education for those without support. If the government supplied money without parents contributing, it would encourage all parents not to.

He did offer some advice on the loan program: "I think that the Student Advocate from the universities should sit on the Student Finance Board."

"I have faith in the system," Isley stated. "You find me a *single* student who has been denied a university education because of lack of funding."

Isley went on to say that students with financial problems should contact their MLA's for help. He said this approach has been successful, with many, in the past.

Isley's reply to questions on tuition and tuition indexing was "I think people have to pay for something, in order to appreciate it." He also felt tuition should be a standard percentage of university operating costs, between 9 and 12 percent. He said further that tuition costs are not a barrier to education.

However, students and politicians agreed on some issues.

"To the most part, they were receptive to our views," says Liz Lunney, Students' Union v.p. academic, after the Night. "Many indicated they would like us to forward them information."

Lunney says that students were able to meet many of the MLAs they could not meet during FAS (Federation of Alberta Students) Lobby Day, on November 9.

"One quarter of the MLAs were there," says FAS fieldworker Matt Shaughnessy. "In the past two weeks we've reached half the legislature personally."

"If they ignore us, it shows a downward swing in our democracy," he adds.

Connie Osterman, Tory party House Whip, says that she and some of her colleagues whom she has spoken to since the event found it informative.

"From my perspective I thought it was informative," she says.

"I picked up some information I did not know before," Osterman admits. She also says there is information she is going to check into.

Osterman also felt that University Night was much better organized than last year.

"Time is better utilized this way," she says. Last year's University Night focused on research and tour of facilities.

"We did open their eyes a little bit," Gaudet adds.

"This kind of lobbying is effective, even if you can't see direct results. The MLAs go back knowing that students care."

"It would have been more effective if the premier or cabinet had been there," says Shaughnessy.

"I got tired of the hard luck stories," he adds. Many MLAs mentioned how they had worked their way through school.

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photo Dave Chan

Two students get dazed in the wining and dining at University Night, and begin to lobby each other.

# NOT A LOVE STORY

## University Night

II

*"You find me a  
single student who  
has been denied a  
university education  
because of lack of  
funding."*

MLA Ernie Isley

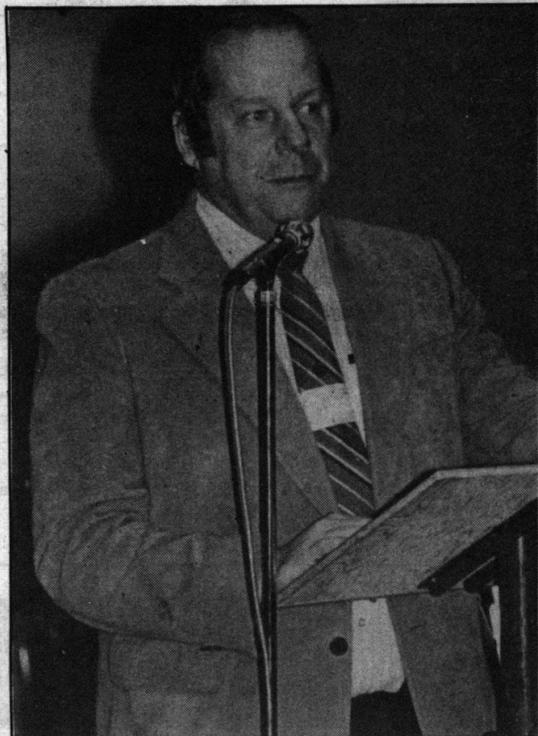


photo Dave Chan

Al Hiebert, education caucus chair, makes an impromptu speech for the evening.

MLAs and students stopped their individual conversations briefly to listen to scheduled speeches. However, SU president Phil Soper was the only one of those who attended.

After listing some famous U of A alumni, Soper spoke about how good the University is, mentioning new programs, research and the University Games.

"We rate in the top three or four in the country," he said.

"But there are some statistics I'm not proud of. We were three million dollars short last year; we've got quotas in engineering, commerce, medicine, in a majority of the faculties here.

"The most important figure: in the last three years we've had to cut 50 academic positions at the university.

"We can all agree on what the purpose of this university is: to provide higher education in this province. The question is, how?" he continued.

Al Hiebert, education caucus chairman, responded to Soper in an impromptu speech, first reminding guests that he was also a U of A grad. "I'd like to think that I would be one of the famous alumni (Soper mentioned," he said, while his colleague Rolly Cook, another former U of A student, loudly booed.

Hiebert then told the audience, that cutbacks are not crucial to the quality of education:

"Learning at higher education is not contingent on 50 profs more or less. There's an assumption on how we learn. First, there's motivation; second, there's the ability to learn; and third, students have to be responsible for how they learn."

Later in the evening, MLA Nigel Pengelly asked Soper, "I suppose you want to follow in the footsteps of Clark and Loughheed!"

"What?" said Soper, without missing a beat, "You mean change the government?"

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exclusive:

Fire in SUB  
late last night

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