

Joe Clark

Goes to School

After former Prime Minister Joe Clark delivered an address to the York Young P.C.s on Tuesday, he was interviewed by *Excalibur's* Greg Gaudet, York PC Member Brian Patterson, and Toronto District P.C. President Peter Van Loon.

Q. Excalibur: I'm curious as to why you accepted the offer to teach here.

A. I guess there are three reasons. One, I've had a respect for and association with York for some time, so I took their offer as being a serious one and responded to it.

Secondly, this is a whole new science as to what one does with former party leaders and former Prime Ministers who intend to stay in active public life, and I thought it important that I not rush back into the party politics side of things. I can't be as active initially as I have been in the House because for me to do that would allow the Liberals great sport, comparing every breath I took with every breath my leader took, and I didn't want that to happen. I wanted, however, to get back into public discussion and this has allowed me the opportunity to do that.

And thirdly, I am giving some thought to writing in some form or another about some of the experiences of a public policy kind that I had in the last few years and some of the notions I had, I wanted to try out on live audiences that might be critical and I found some of those at York.

Q. Patterson: What specific parliamentary reforms are you proposing, such as review of the Senate?

A. I'm proposing one major, one fundamental change and it really is a *reform* because it goes back to where the system began in my judgement, and that is to give private Members of Parliament more freedom to influence the system. That means that they both will have a duty to be more active on issues, secondly, they will, in my view, be required to use their judgement more often than some now do.

What that would do in the system is the following: One, it would mean that the 250 Members of Parliament who are not in Cabinet would also be influential in public policy instead of having no influence.

Secondly, I think it would mean a very profound change in the nature of things if, say, 70 percent of the legislation before Parliament was subject to a free vote. Public servants who wanted to make their case now make it to one Cabinet Minister. Under this system they would have to make it to a committee of Parliamentarians that would establish the habit of MPs and Public Servants working together on common projects. I think that would be bound to be helpful.

Thirdly, I think it's going to be more efficient because it means that the government doesn't have to spend as much time as it now does worrying about every piece of legislation. It can focus on the big items that they think are important. My own view is that this change would be more far-reaching than any of the other institutional changes that are being talked about now.

Q. Van Loon: Do you regret calling the leadership convention? Secondly, how do you respond to the critics who suggested that perhaps you should have gone to Crosbie to stop Mulroney?

A. I regret losing the convention—I don't regret calling it. The convention, in my judgement, was the only way that we could have brought order to the party. I believed in Winnipeg and I believe now that the groups that were opposed to me were of a nature that they would have continued to cause problems for the party. The Liberals would consequently have had something to work at us on. And I'm afraid that we could well have lost the next election. So I think that was a decision that had to be taken.

With regard to the final ballot, quite apart from the peculiarity of someone who is leading supporting someone who was third, I found the positions that John had allowed himself to take—or allowed people to take on his behalf—did not reflect the kind of party that I wanted to see and I thought that elements of his campaign, for whatever reason, were a campaign that would have led the party backward rather than forward, and I thought that there was much more cohesion in the views between Mulroney and myself than the views between Mr. Crosbie and myself. I also thought I could win the last ballot.

Q. Van Loon: But you said that you wanted to stop Mulroney.

A. No, I saw no need to stop Mulroney. His view of the country and of the party I think is broadly similar to mine. I think he's going to try and be a larger leader than his support base was, and I expect to be able to work comfortably with him and win. I think Brian can win. I think there were two candidates who could have won.

Q. Excalibur: Students are facing a lot of hardships in terms of what their future holds. Why should a person be at university? What future is there for a student in 1983/84?

A. Whatever the future, it's going to be better met by somebody who's prepared, and people who are in educational institutions are more likely to be better prepared than people who aren't; individuals who get more training are more likely to be able to deal with the future than people who take the short route now to what they might think is a more attractive, immediate opportunity.

I believe that we have, and we continue to have, an unusual capacity to generate jobs in this country, and generate growth here. I think we've got some very tough questions we have to face internationally, but I think in the short term, if we could restore an atmosphere of confidence to the country, I think that our capacity to generate growth and jobs is superior to that of other countries.

So, I think, one, training is essential for whatever the future is. I think, two, that a national government that can bring the various parts of the community together

towards a goal of economic growth will be successful, at least in the short term, and there will be a better job prospect than there is now.

Q. Patterson: A lot of York University students are in organizations which are anti-cruise missile. I was wondering if you'd like to comment on the cruise missile, its implications for Canada and whether we should be testing the cruise or not.

A. Well, I think that we should be testing the cruise so long as there is a chance of it being deployed as part of our obligation to our allies. Everyone would like to find a way to avoid nuclear buildup. It can't be done by one side only; it has to be done jointly if it's going to be done at all. The cruise is essential to that process of bargaining which we hope will lead to some alternative to nuclear buildup.

Canada has an obligation, not by treaty, but by undertaking, to be part of the North Atlantic defense, and North Atlantic defense calls for the cruise in the event that disarmament discussions fail. We're the only country that can test it. We're the only country that has the terrain to test it. The question at issue in the cruise is whether it will function in conditions of snow, and we've got the kind of terrain where that could be tested and my government that entered into the agreement, and we would follow it through. I don't see it as a York issue particularly, and I haven't tainted my views because I'm teaching here for a week.

Q. Van Loon: Looking back over your career so far, is there a particular accomplishment that you're especially proud of, above all others?

A. I suppose one of the very important things was the fact that we established a beachhead of respect for the P.C. party in the Province of Quebec and I think that in the long sweep of history that may well be the most important thing to date because that was so hard to do and so elusive for so long, and it's there now if we're able to build on it. I'm naturally pleased with some of the particular accomplishments: We stopped a very dangerous constitutional measure from being brought through, and I'm pleased we won—there aren't very many people who led the Conservative party who actually won an election; and we got started on a series of changes that I think point the direction of the changes we should be allowing as a party and as a new government.

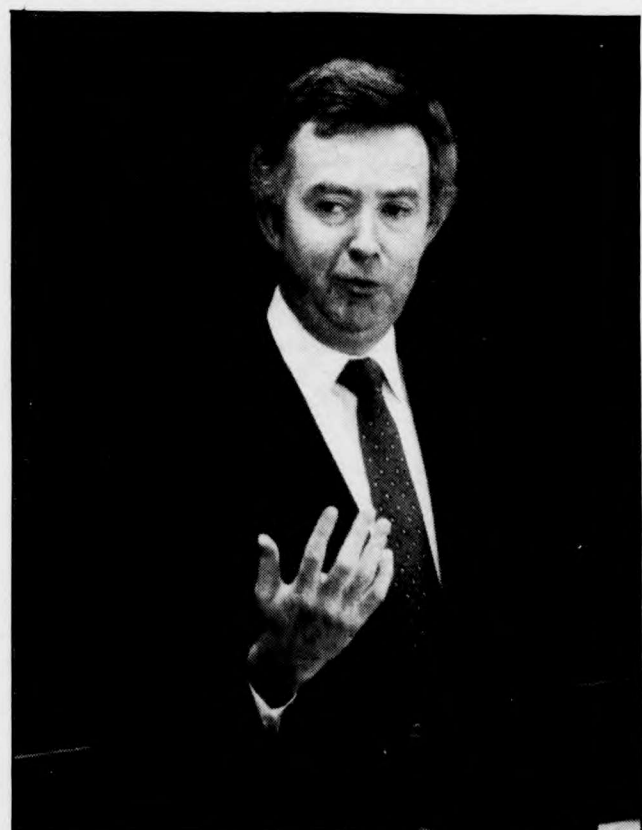
Q. Excalibur: There are many students at York who are engaged in political activities—student government, that sort of thing. What's your advice to those students?

A. I'd urge them to stay active in organizations. I believe that you can plan too much. There's a myth around that I started planning at infancy my rise to the leadership of the Conservative party. I hadn't even heard of the party until I was at least one.

But, as a matter of fact, I didn't plan. I responded to opportunities as they arose. Instead of being active in the important organizations at university, I was active in the student newspaper, and I really do think, certainly a lot of the people I've looked at who have planned too much, are now practicing law or doing something else unrelated to politics or to the career they thought they'd embarked on. So I would urge people to stay active in organizations and in small "p" political life, but I don't think anybody should set out their career plan firmly at 18.

Q. Van Loon: Recently we've seen a couple of political resurrections. The most striking example is Bourassa in Quebec. The question that's begging to be asked is are we going to be fortunate enough to perhaps see a comeback?

A. I would doubt it. I have no plans of that kind now. I'm planning now to get the Conservative party elected and to get Brian elected. I would look forward to playing a role as a senior Minister in his government. We'll see what happens after that.



Photos: MARIO SCATTOLONI