

Mike Spindloe



Politicians panicking

Just when you thought it was safe to answer your front doorbell, it's election time again, already. Funny, it seems like we just had one. Of course, students of the U of A have *two* elections to contend with at the moment; two entirely different groups of candidates

vying for your votes. Unfortunately, only one of these elections is necessary.

The incumbent Alberta government, the PCs led by Don Getty, have over a year left on their mandate from 1986. Why should they be in such a hurry to waste our money by calling an election at such an early date?

The answer, as it usually is when politicians begin to panic, is to save their well-fed behinds from the defeat they so roundly deserve and would probably suffer if the election were called next year, as it should have been.

Two major crises are looming on the horizon for the provincial government. One is the upcoming budget. The other, which may be even more important vis a vis public opinion (after all, we're all used to our governments living beyond their and our means), is the imminent release of the Code report on the collapse of the Principal group of companies. It

doesn't require a crystal ball to predict that Code's report will be at least highly critical of the government's actions in this affair.

Then there is the deficit, which the Tories are attempting to have us swallow with the sugar pill packages of pre-election programs they have been steadily unveiling since the election call.

All this might lead one to believe that the Tory dynasty is in trouble. Good. The PCs showed that they were great at running a boom economy; they've been much less successful in the less prosperous years of the '80s.

The Alberta New Democrats, led by current Opposition leader Ray Martin, are the only real alternative. As the only real opposition the PCs have had during this decade, they're next in line for a shot at power. In Strathcona, well-liked incumbent Gordon Wright (a New Democrat) deserves to be re-elected.

Here's hoping that a change is about to come.

Opinion

A slew of SU letters

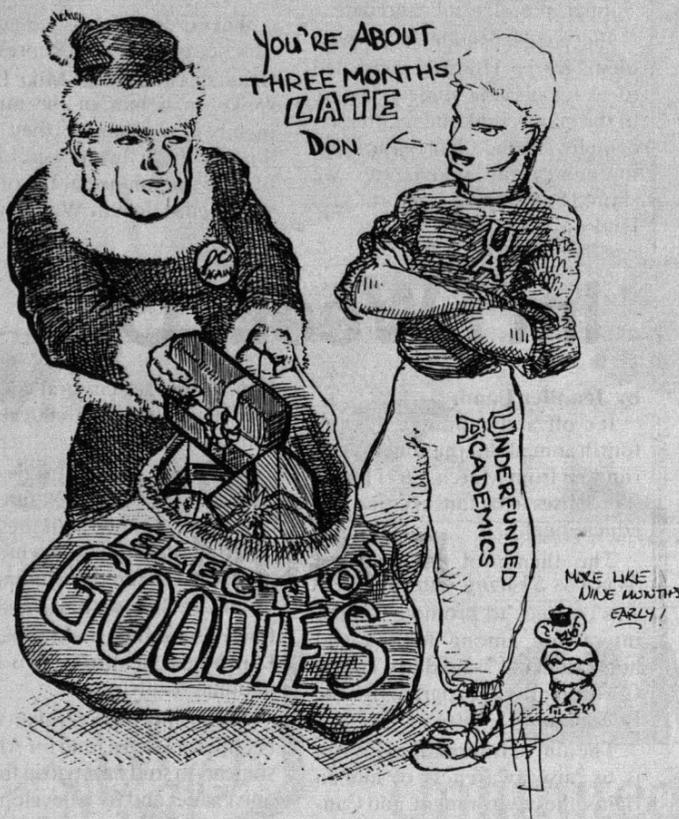
Because of the large number of letters received at *The Gateway* on the subject of the SU election, we are running a special political section in today's issue on pages 4, 5 and 6. Many of these letters may have been solicited by the candidates, so we advise our readers to keep a shaker of salt on hand as they read this feature.

Every year during the SU elections, students are subjected to a barrage of posters, pamphlets, and assorted paper. We are also frequently subjected to attacks, many which are extremely unfair.

This year, we are again subjected to some pretty grotesque slams. I don't want to hear rumors about the love lives of the Direction '89 slate and unfounded allegations about their motives. Clean up the

election and stop throwing mud. We're getting splattered.

Wade Movold
Arts III



Martin Levenson



Watch them squirm

I have to admit to a bias.

But my argument is not weaker because of the bias. It matters a lot to me whether or not the SU referendum question regarding tuition policy will be accepted. I was involved in getting the present policy implemented.

The reasons for keeping the present policy are as valid today as they were in 1987 when it was passed.

Principle. A realistic assessment of student power, and proper negotiating tactics.

The question on this year's ballot asks whether the SU should determine an SU position on tuition fees before September 30 of each year. This would replace a policy that says Students' Union does not find tuition increases acceptable.

The present policy sounds extreme and harsh. Student leaders have complained that it doesn't give them room for flexibility, and doesn't allow them to endorse a 4% increase over a 10% increase.

The bottom line is that tuition increases are not in the interests of students. Over the last few years, we've experienced overfull classrooms, program and course cancellations, yet our tuition has increased steadily.

We're paying more for a lower quality education.

As a matter of principle, no

students' union should endorse tuition increases. We may be forced to accept them, and indeed, they may be necessary to maintain a level of quality, but *that* doesn't mean we have to support them.

The problem is, student leaders think they are in a position to "negotiate" with the government. They want to be flexible, they want to appear reasonable. Most importantly, they want the opportunity to "lick the ear" of the Ministry of Advanced Education, and tell him or her what the *political* coats of a tuition hike will be.

Because, while the funding decisions are economic ones, they are politically determined. If a government has just been elected, it doesn't care about political costs; it won't have to face the voters for at least three years and it can count on the short memories of voters.

On the other hand, a government going into an election year is not likely wanting to aggravate voters. That's why lobby campaigns in the last year of a government's mandate appear more successful. It's not the campaign; it's the timing.

By trying to be "reasonable," student leaders are merely making the government's job easier. There's less political risk involved when you can get student leaders to support tuition increases.

One also has to wonder what student leaders think they have to bargain with. Students at the U of A are far from a cohesive group. Do our leaders think they can organize a coherent student protest to make the government change its mind? Perhaps. But what is it that the government is supposed to want from students when we nego-

ciate with them?

All we have to negotiate with is the political cost of alienating voters. So why give this up?

The third problem has to do with responsible "negotiating" tactics. If indeed the SU is in a real bargaining position (I say it's not), why go in with your final position? It quickly becomes the opening position; we can only lose from there.

The present policy is not perfect, but it does reflect the principles of student unions, a realistic appraisal of what our true "bargaining" strength is, and represents a responsible, if not "reasonable," position to take into "negotiations" where we really don't have any clout.

The new proposed policy is flawed for several reasons. It assumes that Students' Council has the expertise to accurately forecast next year's economic conditions, and thus determine a "reasonable" rate of tuition increase.

Moreover, this economic analysis is supposed to take place in the summer months to prepare for the September 30 deadline. Not only are many student councillors not present due to job commitments, but the majority of students aren't here, so few people could be consulted.

A student leader with political ambitions after university might be tempted to "deliver" student support for mainstream party policies; in return for later political support.

I only bring this issue up because no one else has. There are no official campaigns dealing with the issue, so if you want to find out more, ask a candidate. Then watch them squirm.

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