

Party leaders speak out

The Gateway contacted four provincial party leaders to poll their opinions on campaign issues especially related to students. The interviews vary in length and

format because of the circumstances involved in conducting them. Mr. Lougheed was too busy to be interviewed; his comments are reprinted from an earlier Gateway article.

Nick Taylor LIBERALS

Nick Taylor is the leader of the Alberta Liberal Party contesting the seat in Calgary Glenmore. The Liberal, along with the other three major parties, are running a full slate of candidates in this election.

Gateway: Mr. Taylor, what is the main issue in this election?

Taylor: The Heritage Trust Fund. It has obsessed the minds of the government and the opposition as they plan major expenditures with the money. Like kids playing at Monopoly, they're playing at being capitalists. I propose spending the money on things which really affect peoples' lifestyles, such as hospitals, plans for the disabled, education.

Gateway: The funding of the university has been a controversial issue here for the past year. What role should the government take in funding post-secondary education?

Taylor: The issue has been obscured by screaming about tuition fees. The real cost of getting an education is room and board. None of the parties have addressed that. We propose a system of education mortgages which would be long term low interest loans. People can pay for houses that way, why not education? There'd be no interest until graduation, and then the loan would be paid off by a surcharge on income tax. This would make an education possible for poor students but would also insure that the person getting the education would pay for it. We'd be taking our chances on the person skipping the country, I suppose, but that can't be helped. I also advocate grants for new daycare facilities which would let women go to school or to work. Finally, we advocate developing married quarters for students.

Gateway: What is your position on differential fees for visa students?

Taylor: I oppose it—it's discrimination. The best purchaser of Alberta products and expertise is the student who has been educated here. We'd like to encourage them in—it's a commodity that can be traded, just as much as petrochemicals.



There's one more thing I should mention about the university—we think post secondary institutions should have independent governing bodies. The government would have representatives, but the institutions would be run by academic staff and alumni who are obviously more competent to run universities. Sure, there'd be more friction, but there'd also be a more competitive, thriving group of post

secondary institutions.

Gateway: What is your position on the debate about the and federal provincial relations which is taking

place at the moment?

Taylor: One of the most important things is that language rights be entrenched in a national constitution. We can't leave this up to the provinces. Sure we're nice and tolerant to minorities now but there are no guarantees for the future. How do we know English speakers in French areas will be protected?

Lougheed's talk about control of natural resources is another case of his obscuring the issues. We own them now. As for pricing outside our borders, that's got to be federal jurisdiction. Asking for economic sovereignty in a cultural union is far more dangerous than asking for cultural sovereignty in an economic union, which is what Levesque wants. Look at Germany and France in the European Economic Community—they don't set prices outside their borders.

"The Premier relies on a Fortress Alberta technique. He needs 79 spear carriers to man the ramparts to keep the alien hordes out."

Gateway: Is western alienation a problem for Alberta?

Taylor: It would not be a problem if politicians from the ruling party which I won't name would not stoop in trying to incite a siege mentality. The premier relies on a fortress Alberta technique. He needs 79 spear carriers to man the ramparts to keep the alien hordes out.

Gateway: Do you, while campaigning, have trouble with the association with the federal Liberal Party, which seems somewhat less popular here?

Taylor: Well, to start with, we're independent from the federal party—we have been for two years. I think it hurts me to the same extent as an association with Joe Clark hurts Lougheed. The Conservatives and the NDP try to discredit us by linking us with the federal party—that's politics. There is always a tendency in a "have" province to vote anti-Ottawa.

"We propose a system of education mortgages which would be long term low interest loans."

Gateway: How would you manage Alberta's natural resources?

Taylor: I think that instead of killing the buffalo and saving the pelts, we should save the buffalo until we need them. I mean, let's keep the oil in mother nature's piggy bank—there's not a nation in the world that uses petrodollars anymore. We should let the private sector sell their oil first then we'll have the lion's share as the prices rise. There's no need to compete—we're driving the private sector out of business.

Gateway: Could you give us a prediction of the results of the election, Mr. Taylor?

Taylor: We think we can form the opposition with eight to ten seats. The NDP has a pocket in Edmonton, because they've been concentrating on where the media is, and also in Northern Alberta. They're really our only worry. The Sacred have died, absolutely died. I suppose that the Conservative machine could take 79 out of 79, but we'll all pray against that day.

Peter Lougheed CONSERVATIVES

CJSR: Last year and again this year the word 'cutback' has become almost a byword in any discussion of your government's policy towards the university. Could you briefly describe how your government views Alberta's universities and its responsibilities to fund them?

Lougheed: How can you have a cutback when you have an increase? We've increased it. We haven't increased it as much as some people would like us to do and that's fair for debate. But we've increased university budgets in this province well ahead of what's been happening in other provinces.

I was just in Ontario last week and they were talking about very, very nominal increases in their university budgets down there and I think there's no question Alberta spends more by far than any province in Canada on a per capita basis for university and college education. I think we should and we will continue to.

CJSR: So basically there will be no significant changes in the policy towards universities in the next year or so?

Lougheed: Well, there are two important measures we took this year in addition to the release of capital projects, such as the new Agriculture Building at the U of A. We moved by recognizing that there had been an unusual increase in utility costs and that this was a factor in budgeting at the U of A.

"Those that are going to university right now should be the strongest supporters of our saving in the Heritage Trust Fund..."

We also brought in a new program which I was surprised didn't get a reaction or response from the university, because it was a very positive program of upgrading the libraries on a million dollar basis. We accept criticism, but I think people should be fair when we bring forward some positive moves such as the library enrichment program.

CJSR: Last March, about 5000 students visited the legislature to protest policies of your government. Did that action have any effect on your government at that time?

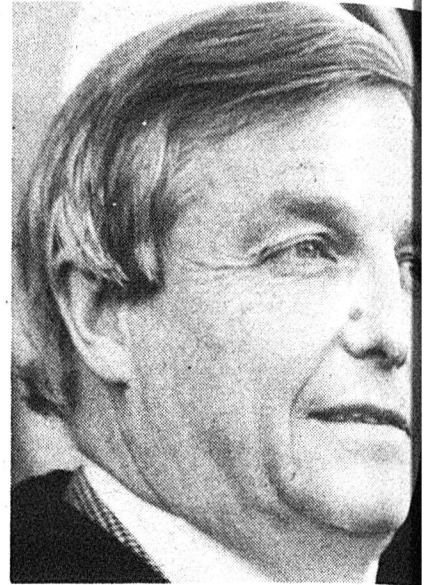
We didn't respond to the demonstration because when a government does, you might as well close down the legislature and conduct it on the steps.

What we did do was respond at that time to arguments that were made to us by two groups. First of all, by the university administration with regard to utility costs, and secondly, to the student union, who raised with us the need to review and assess the question of student loans. We've got a task force which I think will be reporting some time in the next two or three months.

CJSR: Differential fees have been a real sore spot on campus for a couple of years now. I wonder if you could just briefly outline why you implemented the policy.

Lougheed: Well, we think the universities are being financed to the tune of 85% of the costs by the Alberta taxpayer, and that certainly Albertans who are going to the university should be given some preference.

Those students who we want, and every university wants a number of



them, to come from other parts of the world—that is, outside Canada, welcome people to come from other provinces, which they do—but when they come here from other countries, I think that they should pay a generally higher tuition fee, and I think that's generally accepted.

Certainly it's the case in Ontario. It's the case in many American universities. I think they should pay somewhat higher fee. I think the bulk of Albertans, and I wouldn't be surprised if a significant number of students, agree with that.

CJSR: Then you're planning to continue the program?

Lougheed: Yes we are. We think right in principle. Now, there's lots of room for discussion about what differential should be and I think the question is perhaps better directed to Bert Hohol.

"We didn't respond to the demonstration because when a government does, you might as well close down the legislature and conduct it on the steps."

CJSR: I think one of the hardest things for university students to understand why in Alberta, where we've billions of dollars in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, do we still have to pay a tuition fee?

Lougheed: Well, you have to look at what the Heritage Savings Trust Fund is for. What we're really saying is that today we have the lowest tax system in Canada and the highest services. We're using 70% of our oil and gas revenues for our current needs. We're putting 30% away for the future. Now, what are we going to do with the future? The oil and gas revenues are going to start to decline.

Those that are going to university right now should be the strongest supporters of our saving in the Heritage Trust Fund, because if it is simply a slush fund to pay off current needs then what's going to happen to the province?

About 10 to 15 years from now our oil revenues are going to start to inevitably decline. I'll bet the service won't get cut back. So what's going to happen? The taxes are going to have to go up dramatically and the people are going to have to pay those taxes. Those at university right now. So it strikes me as strange. I would have thought that the strongest support could get, in terms of preserving the Heritage Trust Fund, would be from students who are studying at university today.