

THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

This week: Unemployment

THE LIBERAL PARTY'S VIEW

by Jennifer Campbell

Employment is a Canadian concern, especially to young people, many of whom go to university to make themselves "marketable" on the job scene. A large number realizes, far too soon, that the job market is extremely competitive and often bleak. However, in New Brunswick the situation is improving. New Brunswick's Liberal government, according to the 1991 platform, believes that jobs and the economy are the most important issues facing New Brunswickers. Since this government came to power, it has focused consistently on these two priorities. In its first term, the government added 19000 jobs to the New Brunswick work force. Recently, Statistics Canada reported that the New Brunswick unemployment rate dropped from 12.5 to 12.1 percent. This government is continuing to improve the Provincial economy by providing 4000 more jobs this year than last.

The issue of unemployment is particularly relevant to the University community and the Liberal Party recognizes this fact, insisting that "the most crucial element in our strategy to stimulate employment is our single-minded dedication to creating a climate of life-long learning in New Brunswick."

Part of this dedication is an effort to equalize access to education. The Liberals have implemented a public kindergarten program. This program provided kindergarten-level education to 10000 children, 4000 of whom would have been excluded in the old privatized system. The benefits to this new system have yet to be recorded formally; however, so far, the feedback has been positive. The system has been successfully and consistently implemented across the province. This program also created many jobs. Teachers, bus drivers, janitors, and administrators had to be hired to make the kindergarten effort a success. It also created jobs at the universities because a need developed for early childhood education professors to prepare teachers for the program.

At the secondary level, the government organized a study on Excellence in Education and is continuing to investigate questions emerging from this study. It is pursuing a "stay in school" campaign to fight the continuing problem of students dropping out of school. For those who have dropped out, there are programs to ensure that they can read and write. In addition, there is a focus on improving and testing literacy to better prepare New Brunswickers for the future.

Further in its policy for education as a pre-requisite for employment, the Liberal Party will continue to expand the academic fields of science, math and entrepreneurship. The Party will continue to sponsor and promote the Junior Achievement program and will introduce formal entrepreneurship courses for secondary schools. To improve communication between the two official languages the Liberal Party will encourage and sponsor student exchange programs which are beneficial because of their unique immersion aspect.

Another important part of the Liberal strategy to increase employment rates is its commitment to training for the unemployed through adult literacy, apprenticeship, and skills training. Moreover, it has generated cooperative education programs to link education with experience in the work place. Programs provide additional training for those who are seasonally unemployed and offer incentives to employers for re-training their personnel. Finally, the government monitors closely labour force needs to ensure that its programs are relevant to those demanded by the economy.

The establishment of adult access centres will help New Brunswickers gain the skills required to participate effectively in a labour environment. Concerning this plan, an Accreditation System for Community Colleges would reduce redundancy in education by formally recognizing skills a person already possesses.

The Liberal Party wants to put New Brunswickers back to work with jobs that are rewarding and long-lasting. To achieve this goal labour, business, and education must be partners with Government. The Liberal Party of New Brunswick has demonstrated that it can build that partnership to ensure a future in New Brunswick for New Brunswickers.

THE CONFEDERATION OF REGIONS PARTY'S VIEW

by Reg J. Fleming

The people of our province have chronically suffered from high unemployment, and low incomes. Our problems have often been compounded by government irresponsibility. While drowning small business and individuals in ever increasing taxes and bureaucratic red tape, governments have continued to bail out large corporations, and debt has continued to grow exponentially.

High taxes serve to lower the economic welfare of the average working New Brunswicker. High taxes discourage small business and tourism; vital sectors of the New Brunswick economy. Economically essential resources cannot be utilized by the people if they have been taxed away by Big Government.

Provincial sales tax, and other forms of government expropriation of private assets, must be lowered in order to foster positive economic development. In order to lower taxes, deficits must be controlled by government; a task at which the parties of the past have proved themselves incompetent. Government must extricate itself from sectors of the economy where such intervention is unnecessary and/or detrimental. Balanced budget legislation must be passed to enable Government to get its economic house in order.

It is our intention to simplify the complex government bureaucracy by amalgamating the offices of Economic Development, the Regional Development Corporation and the Department of Commerce and Technology. Savings from eliminating administrative duplication can lead to greater economic efficiency, tax reduction, and debt reduction.

The technological advances of this century have had a dramatic impact on the world in which we live. In this increasingly complex environment, quality education often decides who progresses and who does not. Society's well being depends upon the investment we make today. The *Globe and Mail* (Feb. 22, 1993, pg. B3) quotes Statistics Canada's contention that "[between] December 1990, to December 1992, when total employment fell by 0.8 per cent...the number of university graduates who found work grew by 13.3 per cent...at the same time employment for those with less than a high school diploma fell by 13.2 per cent." "In December, 6 per cent of university graduates were unemployed; for those with less than 9 years of schooling, the jobless rate was...29.5 per cent."

We view education as a life-long pursuit and believe that all members of society have an interest in the quest for knowledge. The only limit to humankind's ability to learn is humankind's willingness and commitment to do so. A CoR-NB Government will ensure that education is not compromised.

While paying lip service to "Excellence in Education" the Liberal government's primary concern has been quelling popular input by amalgamating school boards.

Once again the Provincial and Federal Governments have revealed their class prejudice. By attacking the Student Bursary Program and maintaining the tax on student loans, the people are increasingly being denied access to education.

Political leaders holding press conferences and having their pictures taken in front of every business that happens to move into their jurisdiction is not an effective means of dealing with unemployment. A province with one of the highest number of welfare recipients per capita needs real, effective, concrete measures to deal with the tragic problem of unemployment.

THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S VIEW

by Jim MacGee and Dennis McCarron

Reducing the long-term unemployment rate requires a dedication to creating employment opportunities, in other words, creating economic growth.

The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada is committed to a long-term strategy of creating sustainable economic growth. This growth will provide increased employment opportunities for Canadian by improving the atmosphere for Canadian businesses—not just big business, but small business, the largest employer in the Canadian economy.

A healthy economy requires a strong base upon which to build. Our Party believes that in order to strengthen Canada's economic foundation, real reform of our education, re-training and social programs is required. Canada's economic future lies in the knowledge-based industries, industries that require highly-skilled and educated workers. We must seek to equip Canadians to take advantage of these employment opportunities. To achieve this, we must recognize the importance of education and retraining. We must also amend our social programs in order to break the cycle of dependency and poverty created by our present system. The challenge is to develop a social "safety net" that acts as a trampoline to prosperity, not a trap resulting in continual unemployment and poverty.

Creating opportunities for employment in Canada requires an environment where businesses can thrive and expand. We must all work together to build a nation where individuals can fulfill their dreams and open businesses that can compete locally, nationally and internationally. NAFTA, Free Trade, deficit reduction, deregulation, privatization, tax reform, and investments in infrastructure are all initiatives our government has undertaken to help achieve economic growth and increase our competitiveness in the global marketplace. Recent studies documenting the accomplishments of Canadians businesses over the past few years have proven the success of these policies.

While these policies are essential to both long-term economic and employment growth, the most valuable asset in today's labor market—and the key to competing in our future marketplace—is a highly skilled, motivated employee. Too many Canadians today lack the skills demanded by employers. The solution lies in the development of a new approach to education and re-training. The educational system can no longer operate independently of the real world. Theory cannot be distanced from application and practical experience. Government, industry, educational institutions, and students must work together to develop an educational system that will prepare students for entry into today's demanding labor market.

Given the present rapidly changing technological environment, skills need to be constantly upgraded. This places a premium on re-training. Skill upgrading is especially important for those individuals whose skills have become obsolete. This is an area where recent UIC reforms have been targeted. These reforms involve the re-allocation of UIC funds from passive income support (i.e. paying people to remain unemployed), to re-training (giving people the necessary skills to become employed). Our Party feels that more remains to be done in this area, and is committed to increasing the amount spent on re-training relative to passive income support. Employment and Immigration Canada is currently involved in developing several programs which can assist people in the transition from welfare to work. The "NB Works" program is one of these programs, and is a collaborative effort with the provincial government. Once again, all these programs share a common theme; that is in order to solve the problem of unemployment, one must address the cause of unemployment, not the symptoms.

In conclusion, our Party's policy is based upon the belief that long-term success in reducing the unemployment rate depends upon a new philosophy. The role of government should be to extend a helping hand to those unemployed, not a hand-out. Education and re-training are the keys that can unlock the door to the high-tech, knowledgeable-based jobs of tomorrow.

THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S VIEW

by Chris Rogers

When one looks at the economic situation that our country is in it is obvious that the neo-conservative policies of the current Conservative and previous Liberal governments have been a complete failure. There is currently an unemployment rate in Canada of around 12% and it is above the average here in New Brunswick.

The Conservatives will tell you that this high unemployment rate has been caused by the current recession, this is a fact that we in the New Democratic Party do not question. However, what we do, very strongly, question is whether or not the government did all it could to lessen the impact of the recession on the people of Canada or whether it just let market forces destroy the lives of literally millions of Canadians. These are questions that must be asked, since it is obvious from the fact that we are in a "jobless recovery" that the government currently has no policies to create jobs for Canadians, and it is probable that they never did have a real strategy.

The New Democratic Party, however, has recently released a policy paper entitled *Strategy for a Full-Employment Economy* that details our parties policy on job creation. It is obvious from the title of the paper that a New Democratic government would work toward a policy of full employment. It must be said that full employment does not mean zero unemployment or that everyone would be guaranteed a job, to say it did would be a blatant lie. What it does mean is that the number of jobs available would be close to the number of people looking for work. It also means that all actions taken by government would either generate jobs or protect existing jobs.

Obviously there must be a plan to accomplish these goals, since they are not just going to happen. We believe that we have developed such a plan.

We would establish a National Investment Fund. The government would invest \$2 billion into this fund every year for five years, with other investors such as pension funds and other institutions participating. It would be run by an independent board made up of people from across Canada, and would be mandated to invest in Canadian owned high skill industries. We estimate that this fund will create 200,000 jobs over the next five years.

In order for any economy to thrive it is necessary for those who actually do the work to be involved in the shaping of their workplace. Therefore both labour and business will be consulted as to federal economic policy. We will bring in legislation that would make it easier for workers to buy into the companies they work for. We will also increase support for community economic development organizations. As well as reorganize the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy so that it will be put under the control of aboriginal people themselves.

One area of great importance, if we want to build a full employment economy in Canada, is increased investment research and development. In order to do this a New Democratic Government would double investment in the National Research Council and in the National Sciences and Engineering Council. We would coordinate federal investment to steadily increase the amount of Canadian based research-intensive industry in the economy, as well we would tighten research requirements on foreign investment in Canada.

We will also use fiscal and monetary policy to achieve full employment. This will be done by allowing Canada's real interest rates to decline, and allowing the dollar to find its real value against other currencies. We will confine tax-subsidized savings, such as RRSP's, to investment within Canada, and will eliminate government waste in order to reduce Canada's long term debt.

We would also change the tax system so that we could reduce the debt without putting all the pressure on the backs of the working and middle class. We would eliminate the GST, we would end wasteful tax breaks that favour the wealthy, introduce a minimum tax on profitable corporations, reallocate three percent of the current military budget to general revenues each year, as well as other reforms.

We believe that with these and other reforms that we will be able to create a full employment economy and that it can be done with a minimal effect on inflation. We also believe that anything less than full employment is unacceptable.

If you would like a copy of the full document *Strategy for a Full-Employment Economy* you can call the NDP office at 1-800-565-2122 or Chris Rogers at 454-0133.

GST: Keep it or scrap it? March 19