

WCC comes out of the closet



by Allison Annesley

Strathcona MLA candidate for the WCC, Randy Coombs, spoke to Allison Annesley of the Gateway last week on some of his party's campaign platforms for the upcoming provincial election.

The theme of the WCC's campaign this fall seems to be their election promise of less government spending. The

points outlined by Coombs include:

- The return to private industry of any public services which could be better run within the private sector.

- Government reimbursement of medical insurance only to those who cannot afford it.

- An end to government advertising.

- The sale of crown corporations to save government subsidies.

Said Coombs, "We've been advocating the selling of crown corporations and are interested that Lougheed has picked up our policy and advocates the sale of PWA. We're glad we can be of assistance to the government in that matter."

"Another thing is this six and five crap. It's not economically sound. The sale of this solution is simply a con job to persuade the suckers this is the solution and then separate them from their money.

On the issue of health care benefits: "Extra billing is the

right of the professional to charge what's appropriate for his services. Coombs adds: "The government should ensure adequate health care. The full cost should be charged to those who can afford it. You should be able to purchase medical insurance and the government shouldn't provide for those who can afford it."

The WCC lists a flat rate of income tax as one of their election proposals. Says Coombs, "It stipulates a given percentage of people's income as tax after exemption. We want the exemption raised to what we would consider to be the poverty line. After that we would levy a flat percentage rate."

"This tax set-up would reduce the tax burden for those at the low end of the income scale. It would be largely unchanged for the mid and lower top bracket." Coombs declined to define the WCC's notion of the "poverty line," although he implied that it would later be defined by the party.

When asked about the effect

of the decrease in provincial revenue that the WCC tax system would create, Coombs replied: "We do have a surplus in this province. We currently spend, I believe, in excess of 45% of the GNP on government expenditures. That is too much."

At the time of this interview, the WCC mortgage plan was still "going to be a crucial campaign disclosure." Coombs did comment on what he thought the plan would be though "it's my contention that the WCC mortgage program will be fairer in an economic sense. We want housing in the reach of those who are financially responsible. Not first-year university students with no income. That would not be responsible."

Party leader Gordon Kesler announced the \$500 million home mortgage program at a news conference Friday. The plan would be available only to people buying new homes and would provide mortgages at an interest rate of four percent on mortgages of up to \$100,000. The balance

owing at the end of the year would increase by the rate of inflation for that year. The \$1,000 payment Kesler promised to all voters if the WCC wins this election would not be applicable to those benefiting from the mortgage program.

Coombs supports private sector funding for the U of A. "The idea of autonomy of the university is more from government than from the private sector.

If the university were funded by a large number of small donations, autonomy would be far greater than if they received one large donation from the provincial government."

When questioned on the effect of this funding method on the general programs less likely to be supported by the private sector members attempting to fill industry job needs, Coombs answered: "Perhaps that does say something about the value of the arts faculty to society."

"A post-secondary education should be basically job-oriented. Society can afford to fund between two and three percent of its population to gain knowledge for its own sake. Not the 25 percent who are now attending university. I would like to see individuals qualify for a tax credit by making a donation to the university."

The WCC objects to metrication only on the basis of its implementation according to Coombs. "The WCC doesn't care about measuring devices. We don't oppose metric. We oppose the compulsory aspect. Shopkeepers or construction workers should be able to use what they want," he maintains.

Concerning metric confusion Coombs believes "it's a tremendous problem and I think it's up to retailers to provide those units of measure that his customers require."

If the WCC comes to power, they will be offering a voucher system for public schools. Although the Alberta Teacher's Association opposes private schools, favoring a strictly public school system, the WCC has another approach. Parents would be allowed to decide where they would like their child to attend school and the provincial grant would follow the child.

When asked to elaborate on the WCC pamphlet concern with returning discipline to the classroom, Coombs explained his desire to ensure the strap is available for teacher control. "If a student knows his teacher will be fired for strapping, that knowledge influences the child's behavior. While we're not advocating increased use of the strap, we do want it to be available. It must be necessary for another senior teacher to be involved though," Coombs said.

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