

Economy, national unity, unemployment prime concerns of election candidates

The economy is clearly the concern of Acton voters, and all political parties feel they have the answer to the country's problems.

Halton riding's five candidates for the May 22 federal election were on hand Monday evening at the Acton high school to convince voters they are the best man (or woman) in the best party during an All Candidates' Night.

Incumbent Liberal Frank Philbrook, Progressive Conservative candidate Otto Jelinek, New Democrat Party candidate Doug Black, Libertarian Karen Selick and Independent Robert Ritchie each gave their views of the country and how it can be saved.

Dr. Philbrook, Member of Parliament for the past five years, admitted there are two main issues in this election, national unity and the economy.

The incumbent pointed out countries all over the world have been having difficulty with their economies, and not just Canada.

To achieve his and his party's objectives of keeping the country together, there must be a strong national government. "I do not believe that in this decentralized country that we can afford to have any more decentralization actions," he declared.

"We must stop working as ten countries, and work as one."

All Canadians are entitled to the same rights as those in other provinces, Dr. Philbrook stated. He used pension plans, medical care, and unemployment insurance as examples of rights.

Canada's major problem, Dr. Philbrook said, is a party clearly devoted to breaking the country up. The incumbent decided as soon as the election is over, Rene Levesque, leader of the Parti Quebecois, will become very active and vocal and try to win the referendum.

"We need a strong government to handle this," he pronounced.

In spite of what figures say, Dr. Philbrook pointed out, the federal government has created many jobs for the unemployed. One business man he spoke to recently explained to him he could not get enough employees to work for him. This man wondered where the unemployment problem was.

In the past ten years, the Liberal said, the Canadian economy had not sunk as low as that of Japan or Germany.

Dr. Philbrook denied reports of deindustrialization of the country. "We can always sell our natural resources," Dr. Philbrook ended his speech by declaring that Canadians must make the country strong and united.

For Progressive Conservative candidate Otto Jelinek unity and the economy also were the main issues in this election. The PCs, however, did point out that Prime Minister Trudeau had said national unity was the only issue and anyone who did not agree was treasonous.

"If this is the case," Mr. Jelinek told the crowd, "Then I too am treasonous, and probably many of you." He accused the Prime Minister of pitting rich against poor, east against west etc. "And he dares to tell us about national unity," the candidate charged.

Mr. Jelinek claims opposition leader Joe Clark has done more to unite the provinces than the prime minister has.

Economy, to Mr. Jelinek is the number one issue, he says.

His party, Mr. Jelinek explained, wants to see more incentives, and not the "socialist welfare state" the country is now in.

To the New Democrat Party, according to local candidate Doug Black, the main issue is unemployment. Mr. Black, an Oakville lawyer, noted Canada has more natural resources than any other country in the world on a per capita basis. These resources should be used to alleviate the unemployment situation.

Across Canada, the unemployment figures vary from 15 to 20 per cent. In the metro Toronto area, it is 20 per cent. Places like Acton are the hardest hit.

"Dr. Philbrook said the manufacturing sector is doing well, yet the fact is that in the manufacturing sector there is a deficit of \$10 billion. He pointed out the country's natural resources are not inexhaustible. "We cannot live forever on borrowed time."

Mr. Black told the audience the P.C.'s and the Liberals say the government should get "out of everything." The NDP think this is wrong.

He accused the government of selling natural resources to other countries, who in turn use these resources to make goods, which Canada buys back as the finished product. Mr. Black upholds the money should be invested in Canadian business into development and manufacturing.

The NDP, Mr. Black admitted, is not saying they have all the answers, but "we must stop the money from going out of the country."

Long range plans must be made calmly and deliberately, Mr. Black said, "or the country will ooze out of existence, it will not break up."

Karen Selick, a Toronto lawyer with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce is the Libertarian candidate. She explained Monday evening hers is a fairly new party, formed in 1973. In this election, the party has 60 candidates running in 60 provinces.

"People in this country are intelligent and responsible enough to make their own decisions," she insisted.

To her party, the main issue is inflation. This inflation, is not caused by the greedy, as other political parties have accused. She pointed out greedy people were around 12 years ago before inflation got out of control.

She compared the Canadian monetary system with counterfeiting. If individuals, she said, tried to print their own money with nothing to back it up, it would be illegal. However, this is what the Canadian government is doing daily.

Her party's platform is cuts in taxation, Miss Selick declared. There are 59 crown corporations, the candidate said, but only 21 of them are self supporting. This is because, she says, the services are not wanted by the people who have to support them, and should be abolished.

The government cannot solve the problem of unemployment, Miss Selick explained. All it does is take from one group of people and give to others.

Lower interest rates would help many of the country's problems says independent candidate Robert Ritchie, a self employed accountant from Oakville.

The high interest rates, Mr. Ritchie claims, are making the mortgage companies and the banks richer. A good rate, he says would be about six per cent. By lowering the rate, he said, it would be freeing up a lot of money which could be invested in something else.

Mr. Ritchie also would like to see voluntary retirement at 63 years of age. By doing this, he said, it opens up jobs for the youth, but the retirees need a good pension to live on.

"They should be able to retire with dignity."

One hundred per cent Canadian automobiles would also be a boom to the economy, the Independent noted. The closing of the Bricklen plant some years ago, was "criminal," Mr. Ritchie said. He pointed out car manufacturers say it cannot be done, but he feels it can, and hopes to see it within seven years.

Higher tariffs should be placed on imports, Mr. Ritchie stated. This is the only way Canadian manufacturers can compete with companies who only pay a dollar an hour to employees.

The country needs more apprenticeship programs, the Independent pointed out. Industries should not have to go out of the country to recruit skilled tradesmen. "The youth must realize they have to start at the bottom instead of the top," he declared.

Too many students are disillusioned when they graduate from university and end up tending bar or something far from their desired field," Mr. Ritchie said.

During the question and answer period, it was asked how the country is going to get out of debt.

Mr. Jelinek explained that his party plans to cut back on the civil service, tighten up unemployment insurance, and reduce out of country loans. Mr. Jelinek pointed out P.C. leader Joe Clark admitted some of their proposed programs to save money were going to cost money first, but their overall plan was to reduce government spending.

Dr. Philbrook responded by charging the Progressive Conservatives of actually raising the national debt. He told the audience a financial analyst had called him recently who had fed Mr. Clark's plans into a computer. The computer revealed, Dr. Philbrook announced, that the P.C.'s plans were actually going to cost \$10 billion.

Mr. Black pointed out one has to spend money to make money sometimes. He noted PetroCan was a "sure winner" yet the P.C.'s and the Liberals were trying to avoid it.

An employed construction worker, who had to seek employment out of the province for many months wondered what could be done with the construction business.

Dr. Philbrook told the young man the unemployment figures and the actual situation does not mean his situation is not real. The construction business he said is an ongoing losing venture.

Mr. Black blamed the costs of buildings and houses for the reason for the drop in construction. He admitted the business is important to the economy.

The Progressive Conservatives planned mortgage interest rates deductibility will help stimulate the construction industry, Mr. Jelinek answered. In turn, several off shoot businesses, such as furniture, etc., will also have extra stimulation.

Mr. Jelinek said he himself is going to stress the importance of more trade schools and apprenticeships.

Miss Selick pointed out the construction business was used to speed up or slow down the economy.

As long as the interest rates stay high, according to Mr. Ritchie the construction industry is going to suffer.

All candidates but Mr. Ritchie agreed a floating dollar was best for the country, when they were asked where the dollar should be.

Dr. Philbrook pointed out the recent increase of the dollar is a sign the economy is improving. His party estimates that by 1984, it should be at 94 cents United States.

Mr. Jelinek pointed out the dollar has increased since an election has been called. Both the Conservatives and the NDP candidates agreed the manufacturing sector had to be stimulated to help the dollar help itself.

In response to a question of how the Liberal government was going to control government spending, Dr. Philbrook pointed out the auditor general of Canada said he was pleased with the cooperation the government has used in bringing the spending under control. Dr. Philbrook challenged the audience to tell him where they wanted the money spent. Remarks from the crowd shouted the various areas, such as old

pensions. Another man shouted the individuals have no voice.

Dr. Philbrook disagreed with this statement and concluded, "We are trying to recognize the reality of life. People are trying to say they want less government involvement."

Mr. Jelinek said his party would eliminate the sunset groups. These, he explained are the organizations set up to investigate something with the idea to be disbanded once their project was through. According to the Progressive Conservatives, there are many existing the Prime Minister probably doesn't even know about.

The P.C. candidate challenged Dr. Philbrook's statement from the auditor general, saying the man was quoted as saying "The Liberal government has lost control of spending."

Mr. Jelinek told the audience the federal government moved many of its offices to Hull Quebec, leaving thousands of square feet of office space in Ottawa

empty. A lot of money could be saved if this space was utilized.

Mr. Jelinek pointed out Prime Minister Trudeau was against wage and price controls. Opposition leader Robert Stanfield had suggested the controls for a 90 day period. The Liberals, however, contended this was "zapping" wages. Then, Mr. Jelinek said, after he was elected, he imposed the controls for three years, not just the original 90 day suggestion.

The P.C. candidate took a direct stab at the Liberal incumbent when he suggested that if the prime minister wasn't going to listen to his own cabinet, he certainly wasn't going to listen to a back benchner like Dr. Philbrook.

Miss Selick said one way her party planned to cut back on government spending was to do something with the post office. Last year, she said, \$1.2 billion was spent on it. She suggested offering the organization to private enter-

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All five federal candidates were on hand Monday evening at the high school for the Meet the Candidates Night. Left to right, Otto Jelinek, Progressive Conservative; Frank Philbrook, Liberal; Karen Selick, Libertarian; Robert Ritchie, Independent; and Doug Black, New Democratic Party.

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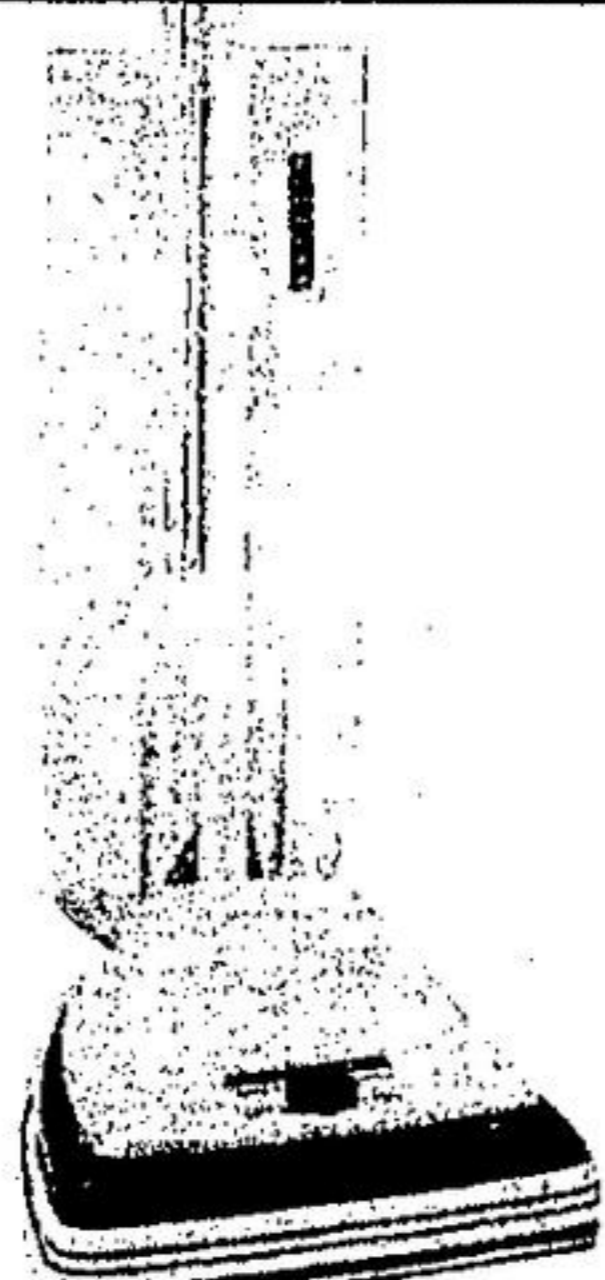
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