

Candidates debate under watchful eye of the public

North Halton provincial election candidates debated each other Thursday for the second time in two consecutive nights.

Sparring off in Acton the night before, Walt Elliot, Dave Whiting and Fern Wolf met again for over two hours in Georgetown at Sacre Coeur Hall.

Questions ranged anywhere from the environment, auto insurance, to pay equity and abortion.

The majority of the all-candidates debate consisted of questions from the audience in which each party member was allowed to answer.

There were no clear winners or losers in the debate, but each of the candidates displayed a distinctly different approach in trying to woo voters. This was more than apparent in the candidates' summaries and introductory remarks.

Liberal Walt Elliot outlined the record of the Peterson government, keying on "strong leadership and a solid record of success." He listed a number of Liberal programs initiated in the province "which will affect all of us," he said.

Fern Wolf of the New Democratic Party talked about programs to help the disadvantaged in areas of pensions, day care and housing. "Most people in this country don't have a union to fight for them so they need a government who will fight for them," she said.

Strong representation at the local level by a "proven" elected official was Progressive Conservative candidate Dave Whiting's main platform during his opening remarks.

It's time that someone spoke out "to get our share of the provincial pie" in the form of tax dollars, he said.

A woman who works for the Town of Halton Hills found support for her concerns about pay equity. Doris Fuller said she has spent six years in university but has been told she is making up to a third less money than what males are receiving in her office.

NDP candidate Fern Wolf said she was not particularly happy with the equal pay legislation, but because of the Liberal-NDP accord at least "a dent" was made in addressing the problem.

However, in order to get full equal pay for work of equal value for all women, people will have to vote for the NDP, she said.

Mr. Elliot of the Liberals said the NDP are not the only ones concerned about equal pay. He said the province should work towards pay scales based solely on qualifications.

male who's making three times as much as I say it's a travesty."

PC candidate Dave Whiting said many women are superior to men in their jobs and that in the real estate business women are treated in an equal fashion.

The problem with the questioner's salary level probably has more to do with job classification and it needs to be changed, said Mr. Whiting. "You're going to have to have the job upgraded (re-classified)," he said.

One angry man wanted to know why, when less than one per cent of the people in Ontario speak French, money is being spent on bilingualism.

Walt Elliot said that Bill 8 outlines the extension of French language rights where it was warranted. Canada had two founding fathers and is a bilingual country, he added. There is no agenda for making Ontario officially bilingual, however, he said.

Mr. Whiting said he was transferred out of Ottawa as an RCMP officer because he couldn't speak French. The candidate said his daughter has been in French immersion since Grade 1 and he appreciates the doors the language may open up for her. However, the PC campaigner said it always scares him when "we have to legislate rights for people."

"Again, it always scares me because everytime we start legislating equality for somebody, it means it becomes more than equal..."

Ms. Wolf said she was proud to be part of a country that recognizes two cultures. If legislating language rights warranted in an area, then that's the logical way to approach it, she said.

"We do have to legislate for those who don't have a voice and who aren't getting equal treatment -- especially when it comes to French Canadians in Canada..."

A question was raised about auto insurance and whether or not those in the insurance industry would be put out of work.

Ms. Wolf said there will still be people to look after the insurance industry and even more jobs could be created. Drivers wouldn't be discriminated under a provincially-sponsored plan. Also, 70 per cent of insurance brokers in British Columbia were in favor of public auto insurance, she said.

Mr. Whiting said you might not lose your job, but you'll become part of the civil service and the department will be run in a less-efficient manner like the rest of the civil service.

Monte Kwinter initiated a rate review and capped the rates for taxi drivers and male youths. The Liberals also set up a study to look at no fault insurance, said Walt Elliot. It is better "if the government can be kept out of it," said Mr. Elliot.

One question caught candidates completely off guard. A woman asked if any of the party campaigners would agree to support government advertising in a Communist newspaper. Each of the candidates replied no.

She was complaining about a provincial advertisement seeking candidates for the Order of Ontario award in a Communist-leaning Yugoslavian newspaper published in Toronto.

David Noble asked the candidates their opinions about cleaning up the environment and other options available besides burning and dumping waste.

Immediate action should be taken to stop acid rain and the Liberals have been concerned with reducing emissions, said Walt Elliot.

There is a similar priority to clean up our lakes and water and also the issue of dumps and regional landfills must be looked at carefully, he said.

Putting garbage in the ground is dangerous and burning waste is a slow process and will take more studies, said Mr. Whiting.

Ms. Wolf said the Liberal candidate's enthusiasm for combating pollution in the province isn't being reflected at Queen's Park. More controls are needed, she said.

All three candidates pledged their

support for an alcohol treatment centre in Halton strictly for women.

However, answers on funding for independent schools differed. The doors have to be opened all the way now for funding schools now that separate schools receive provincial grants, said Mr. Whiting.

Walt Elliot said he doesn't support funding other than to separate and public schools. It would erode further the education system, he said.

Separate school funding is historically based in an agreement made years ago. But when a system is publicly funded "you do get public control," said Fern Wolf.

On the question of abortion clinics operating illegally in Toronto, Ms. Wolf said we'll have to wait for the Supreme Court to make a ruling. "I don't feel anything should be open illegally. We have to follow the law," Mr. Whiting said as an RCMP of-

ficer they didn't allow people to keep their illegal stills operating until the trial and the same should stand for the abortion clinics.

Federal statutes say abortion clinics should not be allowed, said Mr. Elliot. "Hopefully the Supreme Court decision will come down and will justify Ian Scott taking that to the Supreme court with judgement of being an illegal operation and will be closed down."

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Candidates asked about peace

The following article is by Janet Duval, a member of the HAND which stands for Halton Hills Action for Nuclear Disarmament. She asked each of the candidates for their comments about disarmament.

Is the arms race a factor in provincial politics?

Yes indeed! Last November the Legislature voted overwhelmingly to declare our province a Nuclear Weapons Free one. This means that we will not make, transport, store or test nuclear weapons or their components. It is easier said than done, however. A recent survey of local candidates shows a difference of opinion on implementing the motion.

NDP candidate Fern Wolf says she supports a full process of economic conversion through which workers and businesses would move from manufacture of nuclear weapons components to non-military production, without loss of jobs. Companies would also be prevented from accepting new contracts to make nuclear weapons related products, as some do now.

Ms. Wolf would also ban the proposed Ontario Hydro sale of tritium, an essential component for nuclear weapons, to the US and elsewhere, in an effort to stifle weapons production. Further, she would support a ban on the transport of this highly toxic substance around the province by truck, if the sales are permitted.

She also would end low-level flights and nuclear-war fighting practice manoeuvres by NATO bombers over northern Ontario. These flights are receiving strong opposition from environmentalists and local inhabitants including Native People.

PC candidate Dave Whiting says that, while he is not in favour of the escalating arms race, he also does not favour "any form of government control over free enterprise." He says that our way of life is based on the free enterprise system, and that "the prosperity that we enjoy today is a result of that system." He feels that policies such as economic conversion of industry away from nuclear weapons components production, and a ban on tritium sales, represents a "socialist approach to controlling all of our industries in this province. We have seen too many great countries in other parts of the world literally destroyed by socialism." Whiting does not suggest alternate means by which Ontario might try to slow the arms race.

Liberal candidate Walt Elliot did not respond to the survey by press time. It was under Liberal government that the province was declared a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, but subsequent motions to give "teeth" to the policy were allowed to die on the order paper. Such motions will undoubtedly appear again in the next Legislature, and voters will then find out how serious legislators are about helping to suffocate a costly and pointless arms race.

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