

ELECTION '93

CANADA VOTES

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P.G.-Bulkley Valley hopefuls respond to common concerns

by KEN BERNSOHN
Citizen Staff

Still confused about who to vote for?

To help sort things out we asked the candidates in Prince George-Bulkley Valley about three issues people said they worried about: job security, whether taxes can fall, and how pensions can be safeguarded.

1. Technology and corporate restructuring have eliminated a lot of jobs. Each candidate was asked what his party could do to calm people's concerns about job security.

NDP candidate Brian Gardiner said, "We've talked in our jobs strategy about a national training program. We need that to replace a mish-mash of existing programs between the federal and provincial governments. I also think that future jobs will be from what is euphemistically called 'added value' in the forest industry and elsewhere."

Reform candidate Dick Harris said, "We believe real and secure jobs from the private sector. And the only way to guarantee real and secure jobs from the private sector is if private sector business and industries are making money. The way the government can help is to create an environment so that business, private industry, can make money." That means lower taxes for both companies and workers, he said.

"Stay the course," said Conservative candidate Colin Kinsley. "To stay competitive, we have to keep inflation down where we are so unit costs are competitive. We have to keep interest rates where they're at. I suggest that the lower we keep interest rates that's really going to go a long way to help those in the construction fields... Interest rates are what drives the housing markets."

Job security is something the government can do little about, says Bert Prins, candidate for the Christian Heritage Party. He feels companies are often forced to use technology to increase production because of wage hikes demanded by workers.

"Some of the traditional jobs have gone and will not return," said Liberal Dave Wilbur. "Manufacturing jobs, for example, are being done by fewer people due to technology. We say research and development leads the way. Without it we have no hope of being at the front of the line for

the jobs and opportunities as they become available."

The Green Party's Rick Zammuto said, "The restructuring of the power of companies over the people who work for them, and over people who just happen to live in the area of polluting industries are the main things the Green Party wants to break down. Industry interests have overridden the interests of society." He feels a money orientation is hurting the health of people here.

2. Young people asked what they'd like from the federal government, said, "more of the money we earn."

"I have not backed off in my view the GST is a failure and must be eliminated," Gardiner said. "In Prince George that would put \$725 a year in each person's pocket. The GST is taking \$50,750,000 out of the Prince George economy." Removing the business entertainment tax deduction and increased consumer spending would make up for the revenue now collected "without kicking the consumer so hard," Gardiner feels.

Harris said, "That goes back to disposable income. Right now the average working guy that's middle income — \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year — they're paying in taxation of all kinds about 60 per cent of gross income."

And, he feels, getting rid of the federal deficit will allow the lowering of taxes to give people more of their money. "You can't find a problem in our county that doesn't get down to the deficit and debt."

Kinsley said the federal government had lowered income taxes one per cent each of the past two years, but the provincial government increased their taxes each year — taking the money Ottawa had wanted to give people to stimulate the economy. "Kim Campbell has said there will be no new taxes and no increase in taxes, and I agree."

Prins said, "Increase the disposable income of the Canadian citizens and the economy will pick up with a lot a lot more jobs available," and money to pay off the deficit.

"I've heard that message (lower taxes) over and over again," Wilbur said. "In fact, we as North-erners, are mad as hell about what's been happening for a long, long time. We send our tax dollars to Ottawa and Victoria and get next to nothing in return. It's time

that Ottawa heard the message that the North will not take that any more. It's imperative that there be initiatives to diversify the economy of the North."

"Industry has taken over our society. Companies making billions and billions of dollars pay no income tax," Zammuto said. "This has to stop." He feels taxing companies properly would allow a major reduction in personal income tax.

3. Older people wanted "to know we'll get a pension and it will really be enough to live on."

Gardiner feels the first thing needed is to make public information on the status of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). "Some reports say it (the plan) is OK. Other reports say it's in trouble. Lets get the information out so everyone can take a look at it." This is important, he feels, because, "A lot of people don't have pension plans where they work and can't get one on their own. Protecting the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security is critical."

"The biggest single threat to seniors' security whether you're dealing with pensions or health care is the deficit and debt," said Harris. He feels this is made worse because Canada has an aging population so the CPP will run short of cash within 20 years, so "it has to be changed to be self sustaining."

Old Age Security should be aimed at those who need it most, he feels, people with incomes of under \$54,000 a year, and once the deficit is dealt with, the government will be able to give more to those who need it.

"Under our policies there will (be reasonable pensions), because pensions are supported by employment and growth and trade surpluses," Kinsley said. He said Canada's trade surplus with the U.S. has grown \$7 billion in the past year. "The other thing is we can't be clawing back as is suggested by the Reform Party," Kinsley said.

"Canada Pension Plan will never be reduced because that is a plan each Canadian pays into and is entitled to," Prins said. "The issue is old age security," he added, saying he agrees with the Reform Party position of reducing benefits to those making more than \$54,000 a year.

"Everybody has a different standard than mine when they say 'really good enough to live on,'" said Wilbur. "But the Liberal Party is nothing if not humanis-

tic." However, it isn't just up to the government, he added. "We as individuals, regions and communities have to decide what will make lifestyles better for everyone, not just seniors." For example, if medicare is cut, a pension alone won't make up the difference.

Zammuto feels people can live on less than the \$55,000 average household income other parties are taking about in the election. "I live on about 10 per cent of that." But the Green Party's official policy is to eliminate benefits to those making more than \$30,000 a year unless they have health problems, he said, while bringing the income of all seniors to that \$30,000-plus-health care costs level.

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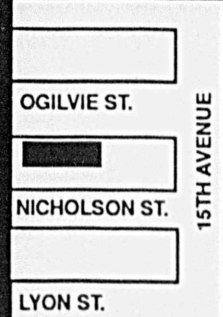
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