

Meet Catherine Callbeck

by Sean McQuaid
Catherine Callbeck was among several provincial Liberal politicians who visited the Robertson library "Pit" on Monday, March 15, to talk with students about their concerns, "just chatting" as one Liberal described it. She consented to a brief interview, as follows.

The biggest concern for students in this provincial election campaign is what government will do to help them, specifically whether government will increase funding to U.P.E.I. and help prevent still more increases in tuition costs. While Callbeck has stressed education as an important concern for her government she has yet to release any firmly detailed policy on the subject. When asked, she responded with characteristic evasiveness by saying that her (the party's) position will be made clear at the debate between the Liberal, PC, and NDP party leaders scheduled for the twenty-fourth of this month.

When asked if she had difficulties making the transition from national to local politics, Callbeck admitted that "... a lot of (the) issues are different." She feels that federal politics "are not as close to the people" as provincial issues such as health care and education, though she says she enjoyed her four years in Ottawa and thinks that her experience there will be valuable in her role as premier, saying that she will represent P.E.I. at all federal meetings "from a position of equality because we are one of the ten provinces."

Regarding local issues, Callbeck says that her main concern is economic development and



that we must make full use of our human resources and natural resources. More specifically, she says that (Islanders) have to develop a food strategy in which the various marketing, testing, and producing agencies and individuals work together to develop new products.

Callbeck went on to say that P.E.I. has thousands of acres of uncultured land on which new products can be developed, and said that "we have to get

out and sell P.E.I. aggressively as a place to do business." Citing the province's "good workforce" and strong marketplace, Callbeck spoke of the likelihood of attracting new business, saying that at least one major outside business and two smaller ones had expressed interest in operating on Prince Edward Island.

When asked about her thoughts on public interest in the fact that she would be Canada's first woman premier if elected, Callbeck responded by saying that "people today vote for the person that they feel can best do the job", and she feels that her business experience and political experience will serve her well in her office. So far as "women's issues" are concerned, Callbeck has never described herself as a feminist but does not claim to be oblivious to women's concerns, such as violence against women which Callbeck says "definitely concerns" her. Still, one of the only clear things about the habitually vague and evasive Callbeck is the fact that she does not want to be regarded simply as a women's candidate. What will count is how well or poorly she does her job if elected. ●

Profile of Pat Mella

by Andrew MacPherson

About a month ago I had the opportunity to meet the leader of the P.E.I. Progressive Conservative party. The occasion was the nominating meeting for the Tory candidates in the riding of Second Queens. Ms. Mella was the keynote speaker for the occasion and while the votes were being tallied I managed to corner her for several moments. It was my first opportunity to ask the leader of a political party questions about his or her platform so I took advantage of the situation.

We spoke about many subjects ranging from the state of the Conservative party, both provincially and federally, to some of her policies I wanted clarified. This meeting took place a short time before Ms. Callbeck called the provincial election but Mella seemed ready and eager to get into the campaign. While Ms. Mella doesn't come off as well in front of the television cameras as some of her party members would like, one-on-one she is very friendly and easy to get along with. I explained to her my involvement in the Student Union at UPEI and outlined what we would like to see from the next premier of our province. While she seemed to be rather sympathetic to the plights of students on the verge of leaving school due to lack of funding, she also pointed out that it is difficult to get a party which has traditionally supported more right-wing policies to make such a switch. It must also be noted that she does seem to be making some strides in the area of improving education as a whole with her proposed provincially funded kindergarten.

I was very sceptical about Ms. Mella's capability to serve as premier of this province but this encounter gave me a few more reasons to believe that she could do a good job if she were elected. While she does not have the smoothness of a Joe Ghiz she is charismatic in her own way. When matched up with Catherine Callbeck she comes across as being a little more sincere. I had the opportunity to meet Ms. Callbeck last year while she was the Member of Parliament for my riding. At the time I believed that she was the best Island MP in Ottawa. Unfortunately, since she announced her candidacy for

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