

# FEDERAL CAMPAIGN COMES TO CAMPUS

By Alan Buchanan

The federal election campaign came to campus last week, and members of the student body, faculty, and community turned out to hear all four candidates for Hillsborough address the issues and answer questions.

The meeting, sponsored by the Department of Political Science, was delayed approximately 25 minutes due to the late arrival of Tom McMillan, but by 8 o'clock moderator Arthur Ross (Professor of Canadian Politics) had stated the rules of the debate and gotten the event underway.

There certainly weren't any surprises in the speeches delivered by the four candidates; Schmidt of the Marxist-Leninists, Birt of the Liberals, and Crockett of the NDP used their allotted 7 minutes to address the issues with speeches which sounded like they had been photo-copied from the "candidates handbook". McMillan of the PC's, however, chose to appeal to our emotions, and devoted the most of his speech to a maudlin appeal to the University which sounded more like a valedictory address than an election speech.

The question period as well produced very few surprises. Candidates views on issues were predictably similar. All agreed on a reversible pipeline to serve Eastern Canada; all agreed on the practicality of locating a Vet College at UPEI; and all agreed on abolishing abortion on demand. In response to a question concerning the decriminalization of marijuana, Schmidt, Birt and Crockett all spoke negatively. Only Tom McMillan spoke in favour of decriminalization for mere possession, but was quick to point out the difference between decriminalization and legalization.

Much of the question period was taken up with questions concerning American and multi-national corporations domination of the Canadian economy. Understandably Crockett and Schmidt both took strong positions against the multi-nationals. What was interesting, however, was the strong anti-multi-national positions taken by Birt and McMillan and when one considers past Liberal and Conservative economic policies one must question the sincerity of their statements.

Conspicuous by their absence were questions concerning high interest rates, high tuition costs, and the weakening of the Central government. Schmidt made mention in her speech of high tuition costs and program cutbacks, and Birt made mention of the need for a strong central government, but no one questioned candidates in these two areas of obvious interest to students and Islanders.

Clearly there were no big winners in the debate. In terms of gaining credibility, Kathryn Schmidt probably came out on top, although she tended to be more than slightly rhetorical; Bob Crockett's NDP policies were paled beside the "make the rich pay" philosophy of Schmidt, and Gerry Birt proved himself a political virgin by indicating that he still believes the system works for all Canadians (The "yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus" syndrome). If the debate were a beauty contest Tom McMillan would have won hands-down. He looks like a model for Eaton's catalogue, and the way

in which he handled the questions was just as slick as the the paper in that same publication. It was in the question period that McMillan's 12 years experience in Ottawa showed up, as he was able to quote data and statistics to help him answer or evade the questions.

The debate was well organized and well attended, and credit must go to Arthur Ross for the excellent job he did as moderator. However, if people were hoping that the debate would help them decide which way to mark their ballot on February 18th, I am afraid the majority of them would be bitterly disappointed.

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