

### Alberta Election '97

The Alberta Greens ran 7 candidates in the March 11, 1997 Alberta Provincial election (see sidebar, this page). Ralph Klein's Progressive Conservative party gained 75% (63) of the seats with 51% of the vote due to the first-past-the-post electoral system in use in Alberta and the rest of Canada. Liberals were reduced to 18 seats with 33% of the popular vote and the New Democrats returned to the legislature with 2 seats (8.8% of the vote). Only one other party received a significant percentage of the vote - the far-right Social Credit party at 6.8%, although it won no seats.

Green results are disappointing, but not surprising. Voters in Alberta are highly conservative, and appear to vote for the personality of the party leader. Progressive Conservative leader Ralph Klein is highly

popular, with most voters blaming themselves for his massive spending cuts to health, education and other social services. His major opponent, Grant Mitchell of the Liberals, is not charismatic and doesn't dress western often enough. Following the election, the Liberal leader resigned.

Greens in Alberta have to take a long term view. We will be trying to apply our lessons from our second general election campaign to be better organized and more effective in the future.

### New Leader for the Green Party of Canada

The Green Party of Canada entered the 1997 federal election with a new leader, Joan Russow of Victoria. The party ran 79 candidates (the same as in the 1993 election), but with much higher vote counts in most ridings.

Joan Russow was elected leader in an April ballot, winning a first round majority. Other candidates were Jim Harris and Rachelle Small. Joan, a bilingual resident of Victoria, BC, is a tireless worker and outspoken advocate for the rule of law, peace, social justice, envi-

ronment, women's issues, and human rights. Joan teaches a course in global issues in the environmental studies program at the University of Victoria. She founded the Global Compliance Research Project, an international organization to lobby for corporate and government compliance with international agreements.

### Proportional Representation

Once again democracy in Alberta is being given a disservice due to our antiquated electoral system.

In the 1993 election the Progressive Conservative party obtained 61% of the legislative seats with only 44% of the popular vote. Now, four years later, they have expanded their support by a mere 6.5% to 51%. This swing (tilt?) has rewarded them with 76% of the seats. This is not a landslide, it is unfair!

Their representation in the legislature is a landslide, but it does not reflect their level of voter support. If Quebec had voted 51% to 49% in the last referendum, instead of the other way round, would we have immediately turned over the country to the separatists? I think not.

The other parties in Alberta are being shafted by a system designed to rip them off. In the Edmonton Journal coverage following the election we saw that the Social Credit, the Alberta Greens, Natural Law and Independents obtained 7% of the popular vote but have NO representation. Both the Liberals and the NDP have well below their fair share of seats in the legislature.

Wars have been fought on the principal of "one man, one vote". In Alberta it is one person 2 votes, another person zilch. Let us start on the road to electoral reform and join the majority of the rest of the world.

- David Parker  
Leader, Alberta Greens

### 1997 Alberta Greens Candidates

Candidate	Riding	Votes
Harlan Light	Athabasca-Wabasca	100
David Crowe	Calgary Bow	188
Joel Ashworth	Calgary Varsity	132
David Parker	Edmonton-Gold Bar	80
Raymond Boyko	Edmonton-Mill Woods	42
Myles Kitigawa	Edmonton-Strathcona	236
Don Ferguson	Lethbridge West	220

## Reflections on a Campaign

Once again democracy in Alberta was dealt a disservice in the 1997 provincial election, due to our antiquated electoral system.

Running in this election I concluded that anyone who thinks it is easy should give it a go themselves! Part of the problem is that we need more support (on all fronts). Although there are environmental activists who should have sided with the Alberta Greens party, many did not, mostly because they felt their efforts would be more effective influencing more 'established' parties. I am afraid that such action is short-sighted.

Should the Green Party represent an activist wing that funds research or should it become a more broad based party with wide public support ?

A political party cannot cut itself off from the general public, a majority of who are concerned about the environment, just because we have not yet won a seat. Therefore our tone must appeal to the public. Admittedly the public is often apathetic and knows little about politics, but potential exists for breaking through these barriers and making the Alberta Greens a real political force.

Often, as environmentalists we have chosen issues which name humanity as the cause for evil acts. Politically, this is suicidal. The electorate will not vote for a party that calls them evil. Instead I think the potential exists to blame our ignorance of ecological science and ecological values.

With the possibility of not blaming humanity, we should develop plans for sustainable living in Alberta that would show how a reduced standard of living can be traded for a better quality of life. These plans must be presented in a booklet that is accessible to all voters.

- Joel Ashworth  
Alberta Greens candidate,  
Calgary Varsity riding.

## Federal Election '97

The Green Party of Canada ran 79 candidates in the 1997 Canadian federal election. This was the same number of candidates as in 1993, but vote counts were considerably higher. Over 50,000 Canadians voted green, although 3/4 of the population did not have a Green candidate to vote for. This is about 18,000 more votes than in 1993.

In percentage terms, the Green Party was a huge winner. Support for the Bloc slipped by 26%, for the Liberals by 13% and for the reform it was down 3%. The Conservatives increased their support by 11% and the NDP by 52%. However, the Green Party increased their level of support by a stunning 65% over the 1993 results!

Green candidates were present on ballots in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland.

This election was more of an illustration of the need for proportional representation than even the distorted results of the Alberta provincial election. The results clearly emphasized regional differences, with no party winning seats across the country, although four of the five major parties do have cross-country support. The Liberal and BQ parties benefitted the most, while the NDP and PC parties, along with all smaller parties suffered the most. Most outrageously, the Liberals won a majority government with only 39% of the popular vote!

It is hard to predict how well the Greens would do with Proportional Representation. They quite possibly could qualify for 2 or 3 seats if their percentage of the popular vote was maintained across all ridings. Also, people may be more likely to vote Green if they know that

their vote cannot be wasted, but will still count toward the election of a candidate even if they were they only person in their riding to vote Green.

### 1997 Green Party of Canada Candidates in Alberta

Candidate	Riding	Votes
David Gregory	Athabasca	403
Andrea Welling	Calgary Centre	874
Dr. Frank Young	Calgary-Nose Hill	627
Sol Candel	Calgary Southwest	305
Jack Locke	Calgary West	559
Ed Schell	Edmonton East	212
Karina Gregory	Edmonton-Strathcona	405
Roger Swan	Edmonton West	194
Vanessa Violini	Wild Rose	690

## Environmentalists Worse than Felons According to Alberta Government

Environmentalists are apparently considered a lower form of life than convicted felons by the Alberta Government. When environmentalists tried to advertise in the Alberta annual hunting guide their ad was turned down. Recently it has been revealed that one of the ads that was accepted came from a hunter who was convicted and jailed for the illegal importation and sale of wildlife parts into the US. He spent 10 months in US prisons for this conviction.

## For your Community Newsletter...

Why not write an article on the environment for your community newsletter? Many people are looking for practical hints on how to become more environmentally aware. Discuss the 4-R's (Refuse, Reuse, Reduce and Recycle) and why Recycling is the least desirable of the four. Identify ways to better achieve the 4-R's in your community. People read these newsletters, so take advantage of yours to soft sell sustainability!

## **International Green News**

**France:** For the first time in history of this country, the Greens have won admission to the French parliament. Greens leader Dominique Voynet, who this year struck a pact with the Socialists that secured representation for the environmentalist group, on June 1st won election to the French National Assembly, along with seven colleagues.

**Mexico:** Green party activists from Mexico, Chile, Guatemala, Uruguay, the USA, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia and Canada met from March 21-24, 1997. They formed a "Federation of American Green Parties", with offices in Mexico and Brazil. The first meeting will be in March 1998 on the island of Bela, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

**Cyprus:** The Cyprus Green Party is protesting the continuation of military exercises in the Akamas peninsula. The rich fauna and flora of this area is being threatened by explosions, fires and the presence of unexploded ammunition and waste materials. Contact: environm-@spidernet.com.cy (Harry Karayan).

**Turkey:** The Green Party of Turkey has been reconstituted as ODP'li Yesiller (Green faction of the Liberty & Solidarity Party of Turkey). Their concerns include environmental, peace and human rights. Spokesperson Kaya Ozkaracalar can be reached at ozkaraca@Bilkent.edu.tr.

**Thailand:** Environmental activists are considering the creation of a Green Party.

**Burkina Faso:** Green Party leader Ram Ouedraogo campaigned intensively in recent elections, promoting clean water, forests, health and ecology.

### ***Those who don't Ask, Get Axed***

*In Stuttgart Germany, Udo Bausch, who had not been invited to a televised mayoral debate because he had no realistic chance of winning, walked into the studios, shortly before the show went to air and severed the television cable with an axe. But, that wouldn't be very Canadian, would it, eh?*

## **ALBERTA GREENS INFORMATION**

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Leader	David Parker	469-1448
President	David Crowe	289-6609
Secretary	Madeleine Oldershaw	282-4788
Treasurer	Pam Munroe	245-3441

### **Meetings**

For information on meeting dates, times and locations, call Madeleine Oldershaw in Calgary, or David Parker in Edmonton.

### **Donations**

If you cannot give us your time, we could certainly use your money! 75% of your first \$150 in donations to the Alberta Greens are returned to you on your next Alberta tax return. You can also receive this tax break on donations to joint projects between the Alberta Greens and other environmental and social action groups. Contact us for more details.

### **Comment**

We welcome submissions for the Alberta Greens Newsletter. Please send them to the editor, Box 133, Station M, Calgary, T2P 2H6, by fax to (403) 289-6658 or by email to [crowed@cadvision.com](mailto:crowed@cadvision.com).

## **Cheviot Mine: The Fix is In**

The massive Cheviot mine near Jasper National Park has been given the go-ahead. Not surprisingly, the joint review panel concluded that "the majority of environmental effects...are either positive or where adverse are not significant." The use of the word 'significant' is legally very significant, as 'significant' adverse impacts would force major adjustments to the mine or even prevents its approval.

Only token restrictions were placed on the mining operation, so the destructions of local ecosystems, including Caribou and Grizzlies is now guaranteed, unless a court challenge can be launched.

One of the major opponents of the mine is Mike Sawyer of the Rocky Mountain Ecosystem Coalition. Some of his projects can be supported to donations to joint projects with the Alberta Greens. Up to 75% of such donations will be returned on *your* next tax return.

## **“Shredding the Public Interest”: A book review**

*Shredding the Public Interest* was named after an incident that occurred to the author a few days after Ralph Klein succeeded Don Getty as Premier of Alberta. Kevin Taft had been working on a project to determine how programs to Seniors could be delivered as the population aged. The report was somewhat compromised before it was completed to disguise the embarrassing fact that it showed that the cost of Seniors services had actually been steadily falling during the Getty era. This did not jive with Ralph Klein’s deficit rhetoric, and all 2,000 copies of the report were shredded. The report was never released.

The central thesis of this compact book is that the deficit hysteria in Alberta was manufactured by Ralph Klein and his coterie of big business advisors. The simplest of tactics was used - to never adjust spending figures for inflation and population increase. With this sleight of hand, true decreases in spending could be reported as dramatic increases.

In essence, Don Getty was a victim of falling oil prices that could not be compensated for by slight decreases in social program expenditures. The real villain though, and the reason why a resource rich province was able to run a deficit, was the ongoing and massive program of subsidies to business (including agriculture).

This is the counter-theme to Taft’s book. Subsidies are easier to disguise because they are spread among several different government departments. According to the author, subsidies amounted to well over \$2 billion in the 1992/3 fiscal year, of which significantly more than half was to the agricultural sector and almost one quarter to mines, oil and gas development.

If you have grudgingly accepted the need for program reductions, read this book. It will make you very angry as it shreds this mantra of the 90’s along with Klein’s homespun, honest image.

## **“Banksters & Prairie Boys”: A book review**

There were rumours that the Alberta provincial election was moved up to counteract the impact of a book being published. Was it “Shredding the Public Interest”? Or, was it “Banksters & Prairie Boys”? Probably a combination.

This book, by Monier Rahall is very different from “Shredding the Public Interest”. While Taft writes in a very concise, clear and unemotional style, Rahall is very emotional, sarcastic and sometimes verbose. However, it is not Rahall’s words that count in this book, it is the letters to and from members of the Alberta Government, Alberta Treasury Branches and Alberta judges that are most shocking.

Monier Rahall was forced into bankruptcy by Alberta Treasury Branches, so a book that alleges massive corruption in this institution, and in its relation to the Alberta Government, could be seen as sour grapes. However, Rahall has very cleverly taken the approach of doing everything by letter, so that every response is available to him for comparison against information provided by different people or at different times.

The allegations in this book are completely shocking - that employees of ATB took bribes, that bankruptcy proceedings were fixed by collusion between ATB and the bankruptcy trustees, and that large loans were given by ATB based on political clout and connections rather than on the financial proposal.

Rahall includes a memo from Premier Klein to Ken Kowalski and Jim Dinning (dated February 22, 1994) requesting that the actions by ATB (and Gentra) to foreclose on the West Edmonton Mall be halted. Just when the ATB got serious about dealing with a bad loan, the premier of the province interfered. The result was that the West Edmonton Mall loans were not called, and the exposure of ATB grew. The extent of these bad loans is now slowly, but surely becoming public.

The interference of the Premier in the ATB might not, at first, seem all that bad. After all, the Alberta Government owns ATB, does it not? However, Klein has insisted in public comments that ATB operates at “arms length” from the government. In fact, it is essential that people dealing with the ATB feel assured that it behaves like any other bank (or hopefully better), and not based on the whims of its owners.

Rahall’s book details the havoc that his strategy of letter writing and an incredible persistence and thick skinned nature wrought. Many employees of the ATB took early retirement as Rahall shone a spotlight on their extracurricular ventures. Judges were removed one by one from his case, as evidence of improper activities arose. In no case was a public fuss made, but as he applied heat, people were simply moved away.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of this book is that, for all its shocking allegations, no legal actions have been taken against the author. It seems rather strange that the Alberta Government and ATB would allow the slanders in this book to remain unchallenged, but that is what is happening. If the allegations are false, surely the author could be put in the slammer for a long, long time, or at least sued for any remaining assets. This lack of action appears to bolster the claims in “Banksters and Prairie Boys”.

The claims in the book are further strengthened by current events. Peter Pocklington is trying to sell the Edmonton Oilers to raise money to (finally) pay his ATB debts. The ATB has announced that it has written off \$198 million in bad loans. A new “independent” board of directors has been appointed. The first public annual meeting of the ATB has been held. All this bolsters Rahall’s claim that ATB was internally corrupt and driven by the political needs of their masters in the Alberta Government.

Q: Of these two related books, which would I recommend? A: Both.

## **Calgary Loses Expo Bid**

Calgary lost their bid to host Expo 2005 at a meeting of BIE earlier in June. This does not upset the Calgary boycott committee, which was working toward this goal. Now the only question is how to support the people in Nagoya who are facing plans that are terribly destructive of their local forests and hillsides.

## **Help Us Pay Our Rent!**

The main expense of the Alberta Greens is paying the rent on our office space which allows us to host the Green meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month (at lunchtime) and provides a space where we can keep our computer and files, and have meetings of various soughts. Donations to cover the rent (\$338/month) are requested. Donate enough for a month, a week or even a day. Please mail donations to our Box number. A tax creditable receipt will be issued at the end of the year.

Like all donations to a political party in Alberta, the first \$150 donated is 75% tax creditable. Consequently if you donated \$10 each month for a year, you would get a rebate of \$90 on your tax return (assuming that you pay tax in Alberta).

If you can't donate money (or even if you can), please consider donating some of your time. We need volunteers to attend environment-related meetings, to write articles or stuff envelopes for this newsletter and to phone for donations and other purposes.

## **Web Sites to Remember**

Alberta Environment Network:

<http://www.web.net/~aen>

Alberta Wilderness Association:

<http://www.web.net/~awa/>

Alberta Greens:

<http://www.freenet.calgary.ab.ca/politics/province/abgreens/abgreens.html>

## **Save Your Public Lands**

The Alberta Environmental Network, at its annual general meeting in May, decided to organize a major campaign to keep public lands in Alberta public. The initial step will be to foil the government's efforts to privatize our public lands within settled (agricultural) areas, which would place them completely in the hands of a few powerful members of the ranching industry.

The government has begun a process to change the Public Lands Act and its regulations. An *Agricultural Lease Review Committee* has been created to make recommendations to the Ministers of Agriculture and Environment on agricultural lease rental rates, and the terms and compensation for access to leased land, including public access.

The Alberta Greens, and other organisations, see that it is essential to review all potential uses of public lands, including ecosystem conservation and public recreation, before making changes to the Public Lands Act regarding the the rights of agricultural leaseholders.

The campaign started by meeting with the review committee and advising them of the benefits of a broader and more logical approach to the Public Lands problem. We will follow up with an aggressive program of public information and actions.

You can help with this campaign! Start by attending the meetings scheduled for July 21st and August 25th at 7pm in the Calgary AWA offices. Call the Alberta Greens for more information.

Authority to improve the review process can only come from Premier Ralph Klein. Phone, fax, send him a letter or drop into his constituency office, and tell him that you want to see a comprehensive Public Lands Review before a Review of Agricultural Leases.

Premier Klein can be reached at his Constituency Office (111, 1011-Glenmore Trail SW, Calgary, Tel 252-0346 Fax 252-0520) or at the legislature (Tel: 427-2251 Fax: 427-1349).

## **Oil & Gas Sales in Special Places**

On June 25th, the Alberta government was expected to sell oil and gas leases in Canada's largest surviving Natural Parkland landscape - the Rumsey South Natural Area and the Rumsey Ecological Reserve. The Rumsey South Natural Area was created in March 1996 and was announced as a contribution towards Alberta's protected areas strategy, the Special Places program.

"It is appalling that the government is selling leases to allow new development in Rumsey," asserted Wendy Francis, Conservation Director for Calgary/Banff Chapter, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). "Special Places need to be protected from industrial development, not auctioned off to the highest bidder".

Six of Alberta's major conservation groups condemned the proposed sale. CPAWS, the Alberta Wilderness Association, the Canadian Nature Federation, the Federation of Alberta Naturalists, the Red Deer River Naturalists, and the South Country Protected Areas Project accused the Alberta government of misleading the public, by saying it is adequately protecting Alberta's remaining wild lands, while at the same time allowing new development to occur in Special Places.

"During the recent provincial election campaign, Premier Klein suggested several times that Special Places will be off limits to development," charged Cliff Wallis, President of the Canadian Nature Federation (CNF). "Yet, here is one of the newest Special Places being sold off to the oil and gas industry".

At a recent meeting of the Provincial Coordinating Committee, the multi-stakeholder advisory committee that oversees the Special Places program, Minister of Environmental Protection, Ty Lund, stated that "sensitive" development would be the norm in Special Places like Rumsey, where some industrial uses already exist.

"Alberta will be the laughing stock of

the international community if it thinks protected areas can include new energy development," predicted Glen Semenchuk, spokesperson for the Federation of Alberta Naturalists (FAN). "Agencies and organizations around the world share the conviction that protected landscapes must exclude resource extraction activities," she advised.

The Rumsey South Natural Area protects a 150 square km. remnant of one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world, the Aspen Parkland. Together with the adjacent Rumsey Ecological Reserve, it constitutes a refuge for a number of uncommon or rare plants and animals. More than twelve years ago, the government reserved the entire area for the future establishment of a park. Rumsey is a nationally significant representative of the central parkland, an ecosystem that has disappeared under the plough in the rest of North America.

On June 25th, Alberta Energy auctioned off 33 parcels of mineral rights in the Natural Area, and 10 parcels in the Ecological Reserve (mineral rights in the Ecological Reserve exclude the right of surface access). In the Natural Area, development of oil and gas reserves will mean huge truckloads of drilling rig equipment being hauled across the fragile grasslands on existing or reclaimed roads.

Government officials admit they don't know whether this fragile ecosystem will withstand this activity. "The extent to which these impacts will affect the overall integrity and uniqueness of the Parkland has not been fully determined," states the Regional Integrated Decision (RID,) a form of management plan for the Natural Area.

"This is a very risky experiment. There are no documented examples in western Canada of successful reclamation of fescue grassland, the dominant, but extremely rare, vegetation type in the Rumsey," noted Greg Yeoman, spokesperson for the South Country Protected Areas Project. "Studies commissioned by the Alberta government have shown

that sites disturbed by oil and gas activity are not successfully restored to fescue grasses. Considerable time and expense will have to be invested to attempt to reclaim these sites in the Rumsey," he predicted.

The RID was developed with the involvement of stakeholders active in the Rumsey area, particularly grazing lease holders and energy companies. However, the final document was written by the Alberta government. The RID allows new exploration for oil and gas provided existing access roads, including those previously reclaimed, are used. Upgrading from undeveloped access to roadedaccess also is permitted.

Since 1980, the AWA and the Red Deer River Naturalists have been working to stop any new roads or other surface disturbance in the Rumsey Parkland. Some oil or gas companies have agreed to do their drilling from outside the area.

The RID's endorsement of new oil and gas development in the Rumsey was pushed by Alberta's Department of Energy. All other stakeholders, including energy companies and other government departments, agreed in 1991 that oil and gas exploration and development should be phased out of the Rumsey Block because of its significance as the largest remaining tract of Aspen Parkland. However, when the long-delayed RID was finally released in 1993, Alberta Energy had ignored the consensus recommendation and insisted that oil and gas activity be allowed to continue.

This is not the first time the Department of Energy unilaterally has changed consensus, multi-stakeholder decisions regarding protected areas. Last Year, Alberta Energy overrode a decision that would have limited the size of a sandstone quarry in the newly-created Yamuska Natural Area. "I don't understand why the Department of Energy is so willing to put this fragile grassland at risk," stated Dorothy Dixon, spokesperson for the Red Deer River Naturalists, and a participant in the RID. "Government figures assess the resources at less

than 0.01% of Alberta's oil reserves, and less than 0.0001% of its gas reserves. The potential for significant future finds is very low," she added.

The creation of the Rumsey South Natural Area commenced long before the Special Places process was announced, but was briefly reviewed and endorsed by the Provincial Coordinating Committee in 1996 before being implemented. "The RID was in place when the PCC endorsed the Rumsey South Natural Area," admitted Wendy Francis of CPAWS. "However, we had not seen the RID nor understood its implications. We never would have endorsed Rumsey as a Special Place if we had known that new industrial development would be allowed," she asserted. "We certainly don't consider it to be protected now".

"Because the government focused on promoting development, and largely ignored the job of protecting landscapes for the last two decades, nearly all of Alberta, including most Special Places candidates, already are committed to the energy, mining, and forestry industries," warned Dianne Pachal, Conservation Director for the Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA). "All this has occurred without the public having a say in these dispositions for resource development in Alberta's most significant remaining wild lands," she noted.

For More Information Contact:

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