

A PLATFORM FOR RESPONSIBLE REPRESENTATION

THE LIBERAL PARTY OF ALBERTA

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INTRODUCTION

The issue in this election campaign is the need for responsible representation. By "responsible representation" we mean:

1. That every M.L.A., whether in government or in opposition, must be responsible.
 - (a) If he is on the government side, he has the responsibility to see that his party administers the affairs of Alberta with imagination, insight and integrity.
 - (b) If he is on the opposition side, he has a responsibility to scrutinize government legislation and spending to prevent error and present constructive alternatives. An opposition member has the additional duty to be alert for lapses in integrity in government, but it is a perversion of his role to spend all his time at this task.
2. That every M.L.A., whether in government or in opposition, has a duty to provide real representation for his constituents. He should be fearless in speaking up for the interests of his people.

A PLATFORM FOR RESPONSIBLE REPRESENTATION

The platform of the Liberal Party of Alberta is positive and constructive, and designed to give the people of Alberta a sound and responsible alternative to the present government.

The Liberal Party does not suggest that it has all the answers. But we do believe that we know what the problems are, and, whether in opposition or government, we intend to come to grips with them in an imaginative and realistic way. The Liberal Party is traditionally a party of reform. The Liberal Party is prepared to search out and try new ideas to improve the conditions of the people of Alberta.

This is a platform of action, not just words. The present government has prepared a multitude of reports and studies, and apparently intends to continue to

make studies, but the future development of Alberta depends on these reports and studies being translated into action.

Not all of the items in this platform are required to be enunciated in detail.

During the course of the election campaign the Liberal Party through its Leader will announce further policies forming part of this Platform for responsible representation.

EDUCATION

The Liberal Party believes that the following programs, combined with those under the headings of " Health ", "Parks" and "Youth, Recreation and Cultural Affairs", constitute a program for human resource development second to none.

The construction of buildings does not build minds. Albertans have a right to educational programs second to none on this continent. Imagination and planning are needed, together with a willingness to implement new and far-reaching changes. The teacher shortage is becoming critical. Present classrooms are overcrowded.

Tinkering with the present structure (and almost anyone can do this) is not sufficient. We call for a deliberate and careful study of the needs of industry and commerce for technicians and management alike, and a review of the very aims and objects of our educational expenditures. We cannot afford to waste our capital or to invest in non-productive action.

The Liberal Party believes in:

1. Expansion of education facilities and programs.
 - (a) Further development of Junior and Community colleges designed to fit the needs of the students, as well as of industry and commerce.
 - (b) Publicly-supported kindergartens for five-year old children.
 - (c) The provision of sufficient university facilities and finances so that all qualified students will have the opportunity of a university education.
 - (d) The promotion of a National Education Reserach Council to provide immediate

research into educational programs and to ensure that the results of such research are available across the country.

- (e) The establishment of regional education laboratories to develop and disseminate classroom research (instead of the present government's vague proposals of education research under the Human Resources Council).
- (f) We recognize the need for centralization of high schools to provide better educational opportunities for our rural young people. However, we also recognize the justifiable concern of parents of elementary school children about the great distances their children are often required to travel daily by bus. We believe that centralization of elementary schools should be carried out only with the approval of the majority of the ratepayers concerned.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

In programs of Public Health and Welfare, it is essential that we think in terms of individuals. Policies must be developed so that each person may develop his or her full capabilities. This means many things, among them:

1. The recognition of individual initiative as the key to the success of any assistance plan.
2. Programs for the needy which give each individual a chance to better himself by his own efforts. Handouts were out of date years ago.
3. The Liberal Party believes in a medical health program which will provide medical health services for everyone in Alberta and which qualifies under the federal plan.
4. The Liberal Party believes in the extension of medical care coverage to include drugs and dental care.
5. The Liberal Party believes it is imperative that confidence be re-established in the Department of Health. In just one field of Public health - Preventive Health Services - a special legislative and lay committee made 247 recommendations in 1967. That is, 247 things are wrong in one field of Health alone.

No doubt there are hundreds more problems requiring improvement in Health. The key staff of several provincial institutions are resigning. Mental health policies are antiquated. Public confidence in the Department of Health has vanished. In this field it is not so much that more money is needed, but rather a policy for the second half of the 20th Century.

6. The Liberal Party believes in a dynamic program of preventive welfare. Our Indian and Métis population needs education, jobs, and above all true integration into the community in order to ensure that they become equal citizens. In addition, in many rural areas, the notion of preventive welfare which has been developed in the experimental ARDA projects should be extended, to enable more of our citizens to be self-supporting. The age of the handout is over. The time for "pilot projects" is at an end. Full implementation of the programs should now be carried out.
7. The Liberal Party believes that the treatment of mental patients in Alberta is outdated.
 - (a) We believe that there should be expanded programs of recruitment, development and training of professional personnel - a "Brains before Bricks" program. There is such a shortage of staff at the two Alberta Mental Hospitals that patients receive inadequate care and are not discharged quickly enough as a result.
 - (b) We believe that rehabilitation and full-up services should be set up throughout Alberta. Such services could reduce the re-admission rates to the two present mental hospitals by as much as 30%.
 - (c) We believe in the provision of properly staffed hospitals for emotionally disturbed children. At present there are no in-patient services for emotionally disturbed children south of Red Deer.

- (d) We believe in establishing regional mental health centres with immediate priority to southern (Lethbridge and Medicine Hat) and northern (Grande Prairie) Alberta.
- (e) We accept the recommendation of the Federal Royal Commission on Health Services, that psychiatric facilities be attached to general treatment hospitals. If this is carried out it would ease the problem of many Albertans who now live hundreds of miles from any proper mental care facilities. It is shocking that today mental patients are separated from their families by large distances.

AGRICULTURE

It is clear that Alberta's farmers are justifiably fed to the teeth with their lot in Alberta's economic system. Some of the reasons for this discontent are:

1. Since 1950 the farmers' share of the retail food dollar has slipped from 60% to 40%.
2. Since World War II agricultural productivity has risen an average of 5.5% per year, as against the productivity rise of 4.1% for all commercial enterprises, yet notwithstanding this, the position of the farmers has been almost static.
3. The gap between farm costs and prices has increased at an alarming rate, particularly since 1962.
4. Alberta's farmers basically remain a large group of relatively unorganized individuals selling to a few large buyers, with a resulting disadvantage to the farmer in the market place.
5. Farmers lack the same source of capital which is available to most industries.

It is of great concern to the Liberal Party to provide assistance to farmers so that they may solve their own problems. With this in mind we believe in:

1. The provision of a larger share of the provincial budget for agriculture. At present 1.5% of the provincial budget is spent on agriculture. This is an inadequate recognition of the importance of the agricultural industry to Alberta.

2. The increased expenditure will be devoted to the expansion of research, soil testing, seed analysis and farm counselling. At present, the soil testing program has broken down because there are inadequate testing facilities, and in many cases it takes six months for a farmer to obtain a report. The same is true of seed analysis. There is a shortage of District Agriculturists and Home Economists to serve the farmer, and of expert counsellors above the D.A. level to operate on a regional basis. Research is required in many fields, one example being the potential advantages of new varieties of grain and better strains of livestock.
3. Improved co-ordination of present research being done by the federal and provincial governments and universities.
4. An increase in the number and variety of college and university courses for the education of farmers. It is becoming increasingly obvious that today's farmer, to be competitive and successful, will need more education. Yet, in a very few years Alberta's present facilities will be capable of turning out less than 1/3 of the number of trained people required for farming and its associated industries.
5. Low-interest long-term loans to help young people start their own farm units.
6. Extension of crop insurance, geographically and in amount. The present government was and still is dragging its feet over crop insurance. Since the federal government pays half the costs of the administration of the insurance program, as well as 25% of the premium, substantial federal funds have been lost to the farmers of Alberta.
7. A better break for farmers under the Right of Entry Arbitration Act.
8. A better deal for farmers when pipelines cross their lands. Many if not most farmers do not want a pipeline crossing their farm. There are many reasons for this, the most important being that dollars and cents cannot repay the farmer for the loss and inconvenience he suffers. The Liberal Party believes

in:

- (a) Provision for a hearing on the route of the proposed pipeline.
 - (b) Developing a corridor system so that as many of the pipelines as possible would follow the same route instead of being scattered over many farms.
 - (c) Licensing of land men under the Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act, to provide assurance that the agent of the oil company or the farmer acts in a reasonable and responsible way.
 - (d) The formation of a single Board to deal with all problems of expropriation, right of entry and reclamation (instead of the several Boards now exercising jurisdiction).
 - (e) Provision of standard Easement forms.
 - (f) Requiring that farmers receive independent advice as to their rights before signing agreements.
9. Increased attention to problems of the irrigation districts in Southern Alberta, which have been totally neglected by the present government. The Liberal Party believes that this industry can and should be developed to the fullest, to reduce the huge imports of vegetables from California and other parts of the U.S.A. Because of the variable return on crops, the present growers cannot do it themselves. The Liberal Party believes in:
- (a) The creation of a marketing board to help irrigation growers secure new markets and maintain prices at which they can operate profitably.
 - (b) Active encouragement of food processing industries in this area.
 - (c) The expansion of research in co-operation with the Dominion Experimental farm at Lethbridge.

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND PROPERTY TAXES

1. The Liberal Party believes in leaving maximum autonomy with the municipalities. We are strongly opposed to the gradual erosion of the powers of municipal

bodies, and their control by the provincial government. The Liberal Party opposes the Municipal Appeal Tribunal proposed in the new Bill which came before the House in the last session and which has now been deferred for a year because of the strong objections raised by Calgary, Edmonton and other Alberta cities and towns. On the other hand we recognize that in municipal government, as in the provincial government, there are often situations where the citizen feels aggrieved at the manner in which the municipal authority has treated his case. We believe that the office of Provincial Ombudsman should be expanded to provide protection in such cases. But, as is the case of the Ombudsman at the provincial level, he would have only the power to investigate, make recommendations to the municipal authority, and publicize his recommendation if necessary -- not to reverse the decisions or by-laws of the municipal authority.

2. Property taxes: The principal reason for the steady increase in property taxes is the increase in the cost of education. We believe that the home owner and farmer cannot continue to carry any further increases in property tax. In fact, we believe that the property taxes are now excessive.
 - (a) The Liberal Party believes that the provincial government must assume a greater share of the costs of education.
 - (b) We believe that the present system of tax increases based on home improvements penalizes responsible home owners. We advocate a new, simplified, assessment formula which will encourage home improvements. By this we mean that improvements in the nature of repainting, redecorating, landscaping and the like should be encouraged by not leaving the home owner subject to increased property taxes.
 - (c) Municipalities today face the serious problem of a crushing debt load. At the same time, the provincial government has a surplus of almost \$600,000,000.00. At present there is a revolving fund financed out of

the Province's capital surplus. However, at present the government lends the money to municipalities at rates approaching market rates. We believe that the interest rate should be lowered, to reduce the cost of borrowing by municipalities, and thereby reduce property taxes.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

1. The Liberal Party believes in an intensified program of industrial development. The present government seems to take the attitude that Alberta has a good political and resource environment, that investors will recognize this, and that no selling program is necessary. Pulp mills are being built in British Columbia, petrochemical industries are being established elsewhere in Canada, and secondary industries are not coming to Alberta. Jobs for Albertans and taxes to pay for improved services to Albertans depend on industrial development. For some time Alberta has had a form of Industrial Development Council -- but it has simply not done an effective job of selling Alberta. The Liberal Party believes new initiatives should be taken in this field.
2. We believe that Alberta's revenues have been unduly dependent on our oil and gas resources. New industries, based on other natural resources, should be attracted to Alberta, and should be disbursed so far as possible in all geographical areas of the Province.
3. We advocate the creation of a Department of Northern Development. A great deal of Alberta's future lies in the North. At present the oil industry, often at its own expense, is opening up new areas in the North. The government of Alberta should take full advantage of this opportunity to expand and develop the Province's northern area. The Wood Buffalo National Park, with its vast oil, gypsum, mineral and timber resources, should be transferred to provincial jurisdiction. The Athabasca River system could be developed to encourage tourism along the Athabasca-MacKenzie waterway, through the construction of overnight facilities along the route.

PARKS AND TOURISM

1. The natural beauty and wildlife of provincial park areas should be preserved, while at the same time the needs of our people for recreation and leisure must be met. The Liberal Party believes in increasing the number of provincial parks and improving their quality. The standards of provincial parks at the present time are incredibly low. Often the access roads are inadequate and the drinking water is bad. In nearly all areas the campgrounds are not properly placed or levelled. This situation is just not good enough. The people of Alberta, as well as tourists, need recreational areas. They want to fish, hike, ski, swim or just get away. Usually it is a family affair, and surely this type of activity is one to be encouraged.
2. The Liberal Party believes in establishing a Provincial Fish Hatchery for purpose of restocking provincial rivers and lakes with both game fish and commercial species.
3. The Liberal Party believes in a substantial increase in tourist promotion. Tourism is a major industry in Alberta and deserves far more attention. We cannot be content to rely on the national parks to attract tourists. Other provinces are spending huge sums to develop their tourist industry. Alberta is not at present meeting this competition.

HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC SAFETY

1. The Liberal Party insists on complete low-cost automobile insurance through private insurance carriers, without discrimination against the young. The present green card system is misleading, as it causes many people to feel that they are protected by an insurance policy. After an accident they discover for the first time that they will personally be called upon by the government to pay for the damage they have caused.

2. The Liberal Party believes in providing an incentive to young drivers to be good drivers. We call for reduction in the high premiums paid by young drivers, which are often as much as \$200.00. These high premiums are assessed whether the young person is a good driver or a reckless one; whether he has had an accident or not. We believe that private insurance carriers should be consulted with a view to working out a satisfactory system of incentives to young drivers for good driving.
3. The Liberal Party believes that more provincial government funds should be provided for roads, bridges and arterial throughways in towns, cities and municipalities.
4. The Liberal Party believes in establishing a Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Agency to encourage the quick settlement of accident claims. Studies elsewhere show that less than 50% of automobile insurance premiums are paid out in accident awards. The object of the Liberal Party's new plan is to eliminate expense involved in determining fault through costly court cases, and returning these savings to the automobile owner in the form of lower premiums.

YOUTH, RECREATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Liberal Party realizes we are heading for a future where the work day will become shorter and life expectancy greater, a future where increased opportunities for creativity will exist. We believe the provincial government has a responsibility in this area.

1. The Liberal Party believes in establishing an Amateur Athletic Commission to assist and co-ordinate voluntary groups in developing amateur sports in the Province. The Commission would assist our top amateur athletes in their struggle to reach international competition levels.

2. The Liberal Party believes in establishing a Cultural Affairs Program which would emphasize youth and encourage an early interest by youngsters in the performing arts and the various artistic fields. All grants would be paid to existing non-profit organizations to assist and develop programs already under way. Distribution would be based upon the importance of the endeavour to the community, the soundness of the organization involved, and the dedication of its participants. The program would encourage the arts and crafts of our many ethnic groups, including Alberta's native Indians.

GOVERNMENT

1. The Liberal Party believes that a Code of Ethics should be established for members of the Provincial Legislature.
2. The Liberal Party believes there should be a full-time Minister responsible for the duties of the Attorney-General.
3. The Liberal Party believes in improving the present bail system.
 - (a) The present practice of setting bail rarely takes into account the ability of the person to raise bail. For a wealthy person, bail of \$500.00 is not a serious matter, for for many people it is out of their reach and they must spend up to two or three weeks in jail before their trial takes place. This is inequitable. The only purpose of bail is to ensure that the accused person appears in court for his trial. A lesser amount for a person of lesser means will be just as effective as a larger amount for a wealthy person.
 - (b) The Liberal Party believes that Bail Magistrates should be readily available in all rural areas.

FISCAL POLICIES

1. This program for responsible representation does not call for significant increases in provincial government expenditures.

2. The main feature of this program which does require the provincial government to increase expenditures is found in our belief that the provincial government should bear a greater share of the burden of education costs.
3. Where will the initial provincial revenues come from? We believe they can be met as follows:
 - (a) Economies can be made in provincial government programs. For example, a reduction of 1% of annual expenditures would result in a saving of 8 million dollars. We believe in seeking expert advice in this regard, as the governments of Canada and Ontario have done, through the appointment of a Royal Commission on Government Organization and Expenditures.
 - (b) We have enunciated a program of attracting industrial development to Alberta. Increased industrial development would generate greater tax revenues.
 - (c) We believe in the establishment of a permanent Economic Commission to advise the provincial government on matters of long-term financial policies. Such a Commission would provide expert advice as to the best use to which the huge capital surplus of the province could be put in terms of a return on investment. These moneys are now yielding a low rate of return through investment principally in the Bonds of other governments.

There are no simple answers to this problem. But the search for answers must be conducted more vigorously and systematically than the present government has done.