

Premier to open dance of the seven veils

George Oake



Our Tories deserve an academy award for coyness.

Ron Liepert, the premier's brusque press secretary, denied rumors that his boss had booked time for a province-wide television address on Sept. 7 when reporters first pestered him about the issue Aug. 18.

By Aug. 31 Liepert had changed his tune. "There has been no decision on a time for the premier's broadcast or the message it will contain," he told panting reporters.

Between Aug. 18 and Aug. 31, the press secretary's semantics had undergone a remarkable transformation. On the earlier date he had left the impression that no speech was planned; thirteen days later he was at least admitting the premier planned a broadcast.

Finally, on Friday, Sept. 3, Liepert gave birth to a cryptic message: "Premier Lougheed announced today that he will make a province-wide television address on Alberta's economy at 8 p.m., on Tuesday, Sept. 7, 1982."

But the press secretary's shuck and jive show will be nothing in comparison to the premier's carefully choreographed buck and wing routine next Tuesday.

The hour of prime time booked (cost about \$15,000 in taxpayers' dollars on an Edmonton channel) is being heralded as "A Special Report From Peter Lougheed on the Alberta Economy." Rest assured the report will be as positive as a Donnie and Marie Christmas special.

A8 EDMONTON JOURNAL, Wednesday, October 13,

George Oake



Our Tories have not been an irresponsible regime, but in the process of shaping their almost impregnable court, they have become one of the most secretive jurisdictions in Canada.

Let me give you an example: Asked for details about Lougheed's campaigning plans last weekend, press secretary Ron Liepert said the schedule included private meetings and door-to-door canvassing in the Tory leader's riding.

When further queried about the canvassing Liepert replied: "If he is door-knocking, you won't know about it."

Informed that The Journal had a keen interest in observing the premier on his home turf Liepert lectured: "There's no way we're going to have 30 media people following him around — how would you like to have your MLA knock on your door with the media around? You'd think he was doing it for publicity."

Gosh, Ron we know the premier isn't interested in publicity during this election campaign. Isn't that right folks?

Liepert is of course just one of the micro chips in the Tory computer. He would not occupy the position he does if he did not accurately reflect his boss's software program.

Yes, it's bothersome to have scribblers and panting camera crews tearing across peoples' lawns in attempt to keep up with the premier. But Lougheed is premier of all the Albertas and the province is still a quasi-democracy.

Tory arrogance is not confined to dealing with ink-stained wretches, however. A leaked campaign memo asked all Tory candidates to deliver a robot-like spiel "concerning a renewal of confidence in Alberta this fall." Sound familiar?

Evidence to back up this mystique is non-existent, or at least contradictory as the Tories stumble through Wonderland.

"What's the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations."

The grin remains.



Don Braid

Premier Lougheed's staff, it seems, would like you to phone your own MLA, not the premier's office, if you want the Tories to come up with a mortgage-relief program.

Of course, they don't say you *shouldn't* phone the premier. You're perfectly welcome to pick up the blower, dial 427-2251, and ask for the short fellow in the suede jacket.

Nonetheless, the premier's people leave the impression your call won't do much good.

Ron Liepert, Lougheed's astute, smooth-talking news secretary, says it's "ridiculous" to expect the government will make a decision based on the number of calls to Lougheed.

It seems that such calls have picked up considerably since a local TV station noted that his number is 427-2251.

However, Liepert says smoothly that the calls don't really show how the citizens feel about mortgage rates because "people will call any number if you put it on television."

He knows this because he used to be a TV reporter.

Liepert is so smooth that shortly after he went to work for Lougheed he wooed Alan Fotheringham out of a press room.

This prompted Fotheringham to give the premier nationwide publicity by writing a column about the "martinets" who surround him.

Lougheed likes Liepert's style, so maybe you should adopt it if you decide to call the premier's office (at 427-2251).

You might say that you saw on TV how Grant Devine became premier of Saskatchewan by promising to subsidize mortgages down to 13.25 per cent.

"I'll support any number if they put it on television," you could remark.

You could also note that your mortgage rate is ridiculous but the government's continued stalling on the issue is even more ridiculous — especially when it has \$11 billion in the heritage fund.

You could add that your call doesn't really prove that you feel strongly about the problem, despite the fact that you're about to lose your house.

You might also point out that Treasurer Lou Hyndman, whose office is just down the way from Lougheed's, actually *invites* you to call him at 427-8809.

You could sign off by asking a question — is it possible that this government will not be swayed if 10,000 people call Lougheed in the next week?



Don Braid

War hideaway de-bunkered

Memo to Premier E. Peter Lougheed.

Dear Sir:

This is my request to get my name on one of your secret government lists.

I don't mean the list of people who say bad things about the Social Services Department. Nearly everybody's on that one by now.

No, I mean the list of 349 people who will join you in a special underground bunker near Penhold when the nuclear war breaks out.

There are only 10 spaces for journalists, so you can understand that competition in the press gallery is fairly intense.

Here are my qualifications:

1. I don't snore.
2. I never waste time in the bathroom combing my hair.
3. I haven't reminded readers for *weeks* that you only gained eight yards in two years of running back kicks for the Eskimos.

Under certain conditions, however, I would prefer to be left outside:

1. If I have to share a room with Ron Liepert, your news secretary.
2. If I have to watch your tourism minister, Al Adair, take out his teeth at night.
3. If I have to "deliver official information to the public" (the reporters' role in der bunker) when I know it's horsewallop.

I've changed my mind.
Please disregard this request.

Sincerely,
D. Braid, Esq.

Premier ponders trip to Europe

EDMONTON (CP) — Premier Peter Lougheed is planning a trip to Europe in February but his office will not say why, or admit that he is going.

"If and when he decides to go, we'll let you know what the purpose is," Ron Liepert, the premier's press secretary, said when asked about the trip Wednesday.

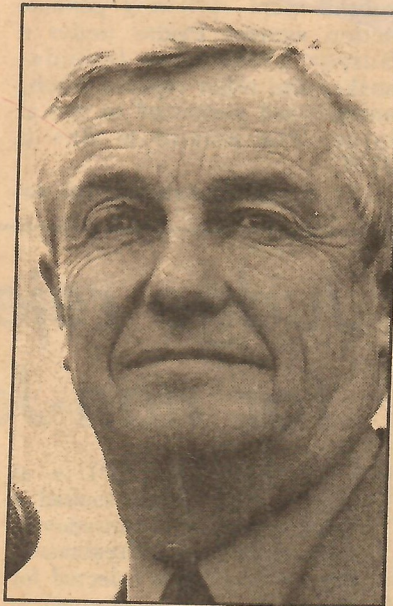
"But the purpose could change."

He insisted Lougheed has yet to confirm the trip, although Darrell Osbaldeston, executive assistant to Provincial Treasurer Lou Hyndman, said Hyndman will be acting premier during Lougheed's absence.

And Randy Fischer, executive assistant to Jim Horsman, minister of federal and intergovernmental affairs, said he imagined Jim McKibben, Alberta's agent general in the United Kingdom, had helped plan the trip.

"I know about the trip, but that's about all I know," Fischer said.

"The premier's office is handling the trip although we may do some briefing for him."



Premier Peter Lougheed

Liepert said Lougheed, currently on vacation in Barbados, "might be thinking" about going to Europe and it's fair to assume his staff has been working to arrange meetings.

"There'd be no point in going there if there's nobody to meet," he said.

Lougheed trip to Europe to include wife, advisers

By DUNCAN THORNE
Journal Staff Writer

Premier Peter Lougheed will take his tailor — the man he appointed as his Calgary office director — on a two-week trip to Europe's dressy banking centres.

Lougheed will also take his wife, Jeanne, cabinet finance adviser Chip Collins and deputy treasurer Allister McPherson on the publicly-funded business trip, which starts Jan. 27.

Bryce Nimmo, the long-time personal tailor Lougheed put in charge of the Calgary office last August, will go to smooth arrangements, says Jim McKibben, Alberta's London agent-general.

Jeanne Lougheed "will be over here to fly the flag on a couple of occasions," McKibben said in a telephone interview Thursday.

McKibben, who has all but filled the working agenda for the Europe trip, said Lougheed will meet top bankers, investors and businessmen in London, Zurich and Geneva.

The premier, who returns to Edmonton Feb. 9, will also meet with Peter Walker, British secretary of state for energy, McKibben said.

After The Journal learned of the trip, Lougheed press secretary Ron Liepert claimed it might not take place. Liepert refused Wednesday to reveal why the premier might go, saying the purpose "could change."

But McKibben said Thursday the trip is "definitely firm. You don't just casually make appointments with these people."

Liepert later suggested McKibben may have talked relatively recently to Lougheed, who is holidaying in Barbados until about Jan. 20.

McKibben said the premier has arranged to meet roughly 70 people, often in groups but also in one-on-one talks.

Oil pricing is high on the agenda with investment and trade, he said.

When Lougheed first made a London-Zurich-Geneva trip with officials in February, 1983, he did not announce it. The \$104,000 two-week trip, which also took in New York, Ottawa and Toronto and included Jeanne Lougheed for part of it, came to light only through a leak in Ottawa.

FRASER

PERRY



Remember lunch, Peter?

The note is addressed to Paul Stanway, associate editor of *The Sun*.

"I'm sending this material," it says, "on the assumption that you wrote the editorial. If not, please pass on to the appropriate person to refresh one's memory for future use."

"Ron L"

That's Ron Liepert, the news secretary in the office of Premier Peter Lougheed. The editorial in question, headed "A whim and a prayer," ran Oct. 29. And "the appropriate person" is me.

In case you didn't read it, or to refresh your memory even if you did, the editorial complained that regular first ministers' conferences on the economy are not required by our constitution, but are held semi-occasionally at the whim of the prime minister. It urged Prime Minister Brian Mulroney to remedy this constitutional oversight forthwith.

The editorial as a whole supported Lougheed's recent suggestion that a conference on the economy be held every fall, beginning this year. And it said this "may just be the most important suggestion he's ever made."

On the strength of that you might expect that instead of the starchy little memo, Liepert might have dropped a "thank you" into the mail, or even just telephoned.

In the grip of recession

Unfortunately, the editorial also contained these words: "Too bad the suggestion wasn't made and adopted before the current disastrous 'recession' had us — governments and all — in its paralysing grip."

Well, when Liepert read that, apparently, he set his minions to rummaging through the archives, with the result that he was able to send Stanway "this material."

It's quite a collection.

It shows that Lougheed suggested regular first ministers' economic conferences on Oct. 27, 1983, on Nov. 27, 1978, and also on April 13, 1978, and June 15, 1976.

Good for Ron Liepert. We now know that the premier has made his suggestion at least five times in six years.

Now that I'm reminded of them I remember two of the occasions. Which is probably two more than most other Albertans could honestly claim. So what?

The whole episode suggests strongly that Liepert is primarily concerned that we may have slighted his leader by neglecting to mention every last one of those previous versions of the suggestion. More, anyway, than he is about getting the suggestion implemented, which was the essential point of the editorial: "Too bad the suggestion hadn't been made and adopted..."

Becoming all too typical

As Stanway remarked when he showed me Liepert's note, this sort of concern has become all too typical of the Lougheed government during recent months.

The least hint that the government hasn't been on the job every single minute of its time in office triggers an immediate, vehement and defensive reaction.

It seems someone over there at the Legislative Building is not just hitting the panic button frequently, he's holding it down.

As I've suggested on two or three occasions (and if Liepert wants the dates I can supply them), this outfit looks more and more every day like a government in retreat.

Maybe Liepert's in charge of the rearguard.

I can't think of any other reason why a strongly-implied editorial criticism of the former Liberal government in Ottawa would be construed in any way as a criticism of Lougheed for not having made his suggestion soon enough.

Somehow, though, this latest episode reminds me of nothing so much as the time I criticized *Opposition Leader* Lougheed and his troops for being asleep at the pass when the Sacred government ran an important piece of legislation by them.

Lougheed had someone dig out some "material" showing that he had spoken to the legislation. I sent him some which showed he'd missed a few important points. He wrote back saying yes, I was right, and suggesting he'd like to buy me lunch "one day" so we could discuss the whole matter in more detail. That was in 1968.

I'm beginning to wonder: Has it slipped his mind?.

Lougheed's press secretary won't put words in his mouth

EDMONTON (CP) — Peter Lougheed's press secretary refused today to issue a statement clarifying the premier's position on whether he will enter the federal leadership race.

"No," said Ron Liepert when asked if a one-sentence statement could be issued making clear Lougheed's intentions.

When it was suggested that some reports interpreted Lougheed's comments to mean the door was still open, Liepert said:

"That was an interpretation on their (the reporters') part. . . I'm not going to put words in his (the premier's) mouth."

At a news conference earlier in the week Lougheed said he would not run for the leadership to replace Joe Clark.

However, speculation on a possible change of mind persisted as Lougheed side-stepped questions on his intentions to run if he were drafted.

"Those are all hypothetical questions . . . I find myself being misinterpreted

when I get into them," Lougheed said. Liepert said it was the premier's right to answer any way he chose.

"That was exactly the question that was put to him and if he chose to answer that it was hypothetical that's his prerogative."

Despite Lougheed's insistence that he will not run, a movement to draft him remains alive.

John Gamble, Conservative MP for the Ontario riding of York North, said Wednesday he will organize a campaign of telegrams and letters to convince Lougheed to go after Clark's job.

Prominent Alberta Conservatives also say Lougheed is a potential savior for the national party and see a national groundswell to draft the 54-year-old premier.

"I think Mr. Lougheed needs to know before he can make his decision . . . that people are supporting him and how wide that support is," said Ron Nicholls, president of the Alberta Conservative party.

The Calgary Sun, Tuesday, September 13, 1983

'Sultan of

HOW DULL IS HE?

Hey, didja see that Keith Spicer rates Peter Lougheed as the most boring politician in Canada!

That's right, gang! The most B-O-R-I-N-G!

Spicer, a former federal bureaucrat, figures Lougheed is so dull, he can't even entertain a doubt! The way Spicer sees it, Premier Pete is tops at keeping a conversation ho-humming!

But what do Lougheed's pals think about Spicer?

The Premier's press secretary, Ron Liepert, tells Page Six: "You know, I can't recall ever hearing about Keith Spicer speaking to dinners in Calgary and Edmonton where tickets were \$250 apiece, and selling more than 800 tickets!

"They're called Premier's Dinners, and that's why people come — they want to hear him speak!"

The Calgary Sunday Sun, August 8, 1982 5

JIM

DAVIES



T-SHIRT TELLS TRUTH

Some T-Shirt messages are very revealing!

For example, this week Page Six noticed an interesting statement printed on a T-shirt worn by a young Edmonton gent by the name of Ron Liepert.

The message?

"NO COMMENT!"

Liepert's job?

Press secretary to Premier Peter Lougheed!

Reporter's view

Kathy Kerr



The Lethbridge Herald

What open government?

EDMONTON — A minor irritation for the legislature press corp erupted into a brief argument between some reporters and the premier's press secretary this week.

The press secretary, Ron Liepert, sometimes interrupts interviews with cabinet ministers outside the cabinet room so they won't be late for the weekly meeting.

Liepert says he's only doing his job. The reporters argue ministers should be capable of ending their own interviews.

The fast group interviews are known as scrums. So Liepert's practise was quickly dubbed "scrum-busting" by reporters.

The altercation was over a small issue, but it reflects a larger concern about the government's attitude to public information and the availability of elected members.

Repeated requests from the press gallery association for regular press conferences with the premier have fallen on deaf ears.

Some cabinet ministers are available on the issues of the day. Some are not. Some are available but won't say anything.

So it is with government information. Some is available but a lot isn't, despite the use of taxpayers' money in collecting the information or paying the bureaucrat authors' wages.

Premier Peter Lougheed says no freedom of information legislation is necessary here because the Tory government is an open government.

However, more and more government decisions seem to be coming out of secret cabinet meetings rather than receiving public airing in the legislature. Often the basis for the decisions never reaches the light of day.

Trudeau 'too late' for birthday bash

By Nino Wischnewski

(Herald staff writer)

Prime Minister Trudeau may not participate in Alberta's 75th anniversary celebrations in Edmonton Monday because he has been snubbed by the Alberta government, sources say.

A spokesman for the Prime Minister's Office, Dianne Scharf, told The Herald today Alberta has refused to allow the prime minister to be included in the official anniversary party and splashy ceremony on the lawn of the legislature Monday morning.

Instead, the Alberta government has offered an invitation to a luncheon being thrown by Premier Lougheed later in the day.

Scharf said the luncheon invitation was extended this week only after Trudeau's office told Alberta he would be in the province that day and that he wished to participate in the anniversary celebrations.

Trudeau has not yet accepted the luncheon invitation.

Last week, the Alberta government released its anniversary guest list which named Governor-General Edward Schreyer, British High Commissioner Sir John Ford, and

London Lord Mayor Sir Peter Gadsden, but not Trudeau.

Ron Liepert, the premier's press secretary, said today: "We invited the prime minister to the luncheon after his office told us he'd be in Alberta that weekend. We did not invite him to the ceremony at the legislature because he did not submit his name in time to be included in the program which had already been finalized. We had no intention of snubbing him."

Sources say that Alberta informally sought an indication from Trudeau early this summer if he would attend the celebrations. When Trudeau confirmed a little more than two weeks ago that he would take part, he was told it was too late.

However, Scharf said Trudeau's office was never approached by Alberta about Monday's celebrations. "The request to participate had to come from our side."

Asked whether Trudeau feels that the province is snubbing him, Scharf said: "I wouldn't go so far as saying that. We don't want to be little about this."

"They just didn't want to extend an invitation. The PM isn't a little kid and he hasn't had a tantrum."

Calq Herald

Aug 28/1980

Bird bombs Lougheed

EDMONTON (CP) — Premier Peter Lougheed's feathers may be a bit ruffled over receiving the international Order of the Bird for spending \$10.2 million on the Kananaskis golf course in southwest Alberta.

"We've got better things to worry about," Lougheed's press secretary Ron Liepert said when asked if the premier will accept the dubious honor.

The United States-based International Association of Professional Bureaucrats drafted Lougheed into the Order of the Bird in December for what it considers the extravagance of the golf course, which has imported white sand in its

bunkers to match the surrounding mountain peaks.

Association president Jim Boren said the group has written Lougheed's office twice but "there's been no response."

"He probably won't be getting it either," Liepert said bluntly.

The association presents individually sculpted birds to mark public follies. The last winner was James Watt, former American Secretary of the Interior, who tried to substitute Wayne Newton for the Beach Boys at a Washington celebration.

Boren said Lougheed's bird, made of epoxy, resin and steel, is ready to deliver.