

Philosophy prof aspires to Senate, has populist approach to schools, taxes

by Pat Daugherty
Staff Writer

"Power to the people" is a slogan that doesn't have any substance until you work out the instruments of power—and that's the job of the state legislature," said Richard A. Smyth, a UNC philosophy professor running on the Republican ticket for state Senate from the 16th District.

Smyth, who specializes in the teachings of Immanuel Kant, considers himself "a common sensist" and thinks political and moral issues ought to be referred to the judgment of the people.

Smyth stands for democratic decentralization as opposed to democratic centralism, control from the center. He said, "If you look at the legislative record of the people that I'm running against, you'll see that almost invariably the legislation that they prefer, takes power from the people and moves it to Raleigh or to Washington. That's a trend that's got to stop."

"I believe that the liberal movement that has dominated American politics for the last 30 or 40 years has run out of steam intellectually," he said.

"There's no doubt at all that it (his philosophy background) is a liability in the campaign because of the association that it gives me with the university. The university, politically, is not popular through the state, or at least through the 16th District which is a very conservative district. The University is perceived as the center of liberalism," Smyth said.

He doesn't apologize for bringing his philosophical background into politics, however. "I think it's a useful element to inject into it," Smyth said.

The major issues in his campaign, Smyth said, are education and taxation. However, as a teacher, and with three children in Carrboro-Chapel Hill schools, Smyth admits that education interests him most.

"The main thing that I see is that there is no one problem in education. It's a very complex area in that there are different problems at the different levels."

In higher education, Smyth thinks there is going to be a trend toward equalization of various elements such as the uniform wage scale across the University of North Carolina system. He thinks such trends will have to be resisted over the next few years. "What I see from the inside gives me a very useful kind of knowledge to bring to Raleigh because it makes me realize how unrealistic that kind of equalization is," Smyth said.

Smyth is interested in setting up a



Richard A. Smyth

secondary education system that would test the school rather than the pupil. "If there's failure in the system, it has to be a failure of the school and not the pupil," Smyth said.

According to Smyth, the schools are failing to prepare students who do not go to college for actual employment. Smyth said the state's employment agencies should be put into the high schools to help graduates get jobs.

Smyth said inflation "is the forgery of money by government." He said, although inflation is basically a federal problem, "The state Legislature can be an important battle ground in the general war against inflation, partly by making a conscientious effort to hold down costs in state government, but also by educating the people about the nature of inflation and its effects."

Smyth said "Taxes tend to get passed through until they reach people in the economy that can't pass them on, and those are the people with the least economic leverage. There's an enormous

amount of social injustice involved in that kind of taxation."

Smyth is running against Charles Vickery of Chapel Hill and Russell Walker of Randolph County.



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