Gubernatorial hopeful favors uninhibited university forum

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Gubernatorial hopeful favors uninhibited university forum

"I don't think that we ought to so rigidly restrict the university so that we don't allow differing points of view," said State Senator Harrison Richardson Friday, referring to anger expressed recently by Republican House leaders over the state-wide gay conference to be held at UMO.

Richardson, a candidate for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, addressed a small gathering in the Memorial Union. He said he believes in an "independent university system."

At a party caucus Wednesday, some GOP legislators said that they would vote against a proposed $9.7 million capital construction program for the Super-U to protest the gay conference which is sponsored by the Wilde-Stein Club.

"I wouldn't make a big deal out of it," said the Cumberland lawmaker. "I wouldn't mind if a DLS lecturer came up and said Harry Richardson is a lousy governor." It is important for the university to allow freedom of expression, he said.

Introduced as one of the legislature's "strongest supporters" of the university, Richardson said, "During the Kent State controversy I was one of three people including Chancellor McNeil, and another legislator who wanted a capital bond issue" for the university. "But the people turned it down," he said, noting the results of a state referendum.

As an element of Watergate and the Nixon administration, Richardson explained, "I was a delegate to the national convention in 1968. Maine was entitled to 14 votes. Seven went to Rockefeller, and seven went to Nixon. I voted for Rockefeller."

"I would suggest that that vote would be indicative of my feelings," he added. He praised the first Nixon administration for what he termed "progressive domestic programs that ought to have been followed through". However, he cited a "crisis in confidence in government" and called on the President for a "full disclosure" of the "foolish, wrong, and arrogant" events of the Watergate affair.

"I am sick of Watergate," Richardson said. As for impeachment, Richardson said the House Judiciary Committee should "get on with it, and vote a bill of impeachment, or else drop it."

Richardson's speech addressed a number of state issues, including budget—reform, public power, the economy,
Richardson off and running

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environment, public land management, and limiting campaign expenditures.

"I am in full support of budget reform," Richardson said. "And that is one of the reasons I want to be governor."

"I sponsored a zero-based budget order bill," he said. Under his bill, state programs would not be re-funded automatically each session. Instead, they would be evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness, he said.

The senator also called for state programs to be paid for by the legislative session which initiates them. "If we're going to have a program, it's going to be honestly financed," he said.

"I do not believe it is necessary to increase the corporate or personal income tax within the foreseeable future," Richardson observed. But he qualified his statement by adding that it could only come about with "proper management" of the state government.

"I wear the label as an environmentalist, but I don't take all the credit or blame," said Richardson. Citing a need to strike a "sensible balance between quality industry and environmental concerns," the former majority leader of the House said too much emphasis on either environmental protection or industry is bad for the state. He stressed the need to bring "quality industry" to Maine, and gave as an example the types of industry that use Maine's wood resources, such as furniture production.

Asked his position on the proposed oil refinery at Eastport, Richardson replied, "If I were governor, I would not interfere with the deliberations of administrative agencies." He claimed the Maine Board of Environmental Protection is armed with "the toughest pollution control law in the country." "If the oil companies can meet that test, then I'm willing," he said.

But the Republican lawmaker charged the Pittston Oil company "hasn't guaranteed one barrel of heating oil or one tankful of gasoline for Maine." Pittston has proposed locating a refinery in Eastport. "We ought to ask such a refinery that locates here to make such a guarantee," Richardson said.

He also called for a re-evaluation of the cost-to-benefit ratio of the Passamaquoddy tidal project which would use the Eastport Bay area to generate hydro-electric power.

"I would favor a federally financed hydro-electric power authority for Maine," the senator said. Richardson opposed a recent bill to establish a "Power Authority of Maine" because it was a poorly drafted bill," he said.

On the issues of campaign reform and legislative ethics, the senator said that he sponsored a bill drafted by Common Cause that would have established "what constitutes conflict of interest for a legislator," and would have required to reveal his sources of income if there was any question of such a conflict. The senate bill was defeated because "it was just the wrong time," Richardson said. But he added that "in this session I believe we will get ethics legislation through."

The senator also said he would vote for legislation to "limit campaign expenditures for the office of governor."

Richardson, who is chairman of the Senate's Special Committee on Public Lands, said "the 400,000 acres of public lots have been grossly mismanaged." He suggested they be used to entice quality, non-polluting industry to the state.

If elected governor, the Cumberland Republican said he would establish a "Committee on Maine's Future," because he feels that Maine, which now copes with an estimated 8 million tourists a year, should "make plans to accommodate 20 million tourists by 1980."