

Lively anglos and the language debate

If you're sick about hearing about the debate over language and separatism, stop reading this immediately. There are probably some classified ads on page 8 which are a lot more interesting.

But if you want to take yet another nauseating roller-coaster ride through that crazy theme park called Language World, hang on tight and read on.

Lucien Bouchard, the leader of the federal sovereigntist party, the Bloc Québécois, is in a war of words with Roger Landry, the publisher of La Presse, a Montreal French-language newspaper.

Landry made a speech recently in Montreal in which he said Quebecers from Lac-St-Jean can't really understand the subtleties of the language situation in Montreal.

"They come from a place where there aren't any (anglophones)," Landry said. "They all come from Lac-St-Jean. They can't fight with the English, they've never seen any."

Bouchard, who happens to be the MP for Lac-St-Jean, took issue.

He said French Quebecers there do understand the situation. Further, he said, the area has a "lively English-speaking community that is a model of integration and of understanding and respect for the community as a whole."

Bouchard might be an honorable and gracious man, understandably insulted by the comment. But you have to wonder about his judgment.

No offence to the English speakers in Lac-St-Jean, but if he considers their community lively he might have not-so-great expectations for the future of other anglophones in Quebec. In other words, lively seems like a euphemism, a nice way of saying "they make up a tiny percentage of the population, they don't cause many problems and they're sort of quaint."

Their schools are disappearing, their newspaper is already long gone. Bouchard must presumably feel that as long as the anglophones are allowed to speak English in their own homes, or in small public gatherings, their community is lively.

But you don't hear all that much about the thriving English community of Lac-St-Jean these days, do you?

So if the Eastern Townships eventually have an anglophone community like Lac-St-Jean's, with only one elementary school and one high school and no newspapers, and people like Lucien Bouchard are in charge in Quebec, what will he call the few hardy anglophones who are left? Lively?

SHAWN APEL

Children should be allowed to vote

It's time to abolish the voting age restriction, says Geoff Berner, writing in *Youth Ecology News*, an occasional publication of Vancouver's Youth Ecology Coalition.

This is what happens when I say that all age restrictions on voting should be removed and all Canadian citizens, including children, should be allowed to vote: You laugh, snort, or harrumph. "What a ridiculous notion! Not even worth consideration."

If I press, you will advance to one or more of the arguments below:

- Children are too young to handle the awesome responsibility of voting or to understand the complexities of politics — after all many of them can't even read.

This argument is based on a broad generalization about a very large group. Many Canadian citizens below the voting age are better informed and more intelligent than many adults. More importantly, it is not legal to take away the vote based on intelligence. A mentally handicapped person with a mental age of six may vote, and rightfully so. Why can't a six-year-old?

- Kids are too easily influenced by (check one or all): Parents, peers, the media, teachers or Mr. Dressup.

This is another sweeping generalization. Most people hold similar views to those of their parents. Most people believe what they see on TV. Who are we to determine at what age they are being influenced and (at what age) able to "think for themselves."

- Kids don't want the vote anyway.

This is a silly argument. Those who don't want to vote can stay home on election day as so many of their parents do. If kids were able and encouraged to vote, they'd be more likely to get involved and informed about politics as adults.

From *What Canada Thinks*, a regular feature of *The Canadian Press*

Did you know that...

LAKE CREATURES

Unidentified lake creatures most often reported in Canadian lakes include Otopogo in Lake Okanagan, B.C., and Champ in Quebec's Lake Champlain.

Letters

Dear Editor,

The other day I got a newsletter from a group called the Tomophobia Valley Homeowners' Association asking me to be a supporter.

This group was put together solely to try to stop a non-profit environmental group called Sentier Massawippi from preserving the CP right of way as a green space or, horror of horrors — a bike path. I can see both sides in this needless dispute.

The newsletter had a few contradictions though. At one point they say they want to let this right of way "return to its natural state" after they just stated about the river being allowed to return to its former course — "the one it had prior to diversion by CP in the late 19th century, resulting in further costs." — so, whatever happens there will be maintenance costs.

Sentier Massawippi does not want to be a "developer" and it owns this property reluctantly. It is not just a Lennoxville group and it doesn't want people to be forced

Dangers come with haste

to pay for something they can't use.

They are contradictions from both sides about who will do the most environmental damage and comments about a bike path generating or not generating economic benefits.

The newsletter states that land use bylaws will stop "any 'recreotouristic' development" anyway, so from the Homeowners' Association point of view — what's the problem? — doesn't this kill any trail builders? Apparently not.

O.K. O.K. enough already. Stop thinking up all this stuff. The real problem is a possible threat to peoples privacy living near the old rail line — why not say this? It's nothing to be ashamed of. We all like our space — and there are some really nice people along that line — and not of all them oppose the rail.

There are dangers. The people who threw together an association along the shores of Lake Massawippi to oppose the vastly overrated powers of some green dreamers later to be called Sentier Massawippi have collectively lost millions and the benefits of the corridor — some lost access to their land.

Dangers come with haste. Economically, times are tough and will be for a long time. Sentier Massawippi might have to give up some of their dreams.

It has a large membership but individual members seem reluctant to put out much of their own cash. Everybody wants to go to heaven — nobody wants to die. That's the Canadian way.

There's lots of time. It would be a good idea if everybody just calmed down and chatted about it for a few years.

Everybody seems to agree that the natural environment is the first priority.

GEORGE FOSTER
Ways Mills

Not ironic at all

Dear Editor:

Many Quebecers must find it ironic, even absurd, that the Liberal Party of Quebec considers being led by a Péquiste — an ex-PQ premier, at that. But is it, in fact, ironic at all?

After the adoption of the Allaire Report as party policy, after the scheduled-then-aborted referendum on sovereignty, after the subsequent defeted referendum on distinct society, after the 'secret sovereignty' plan (*Le Devoir*,

May 17 — mysteriously overlooked in the English press), prospects of the Liberal leadership going from the hands of a man who bragged about denying his people rights other Canadians enjoy into the hands of a man who is a member of — and once led — a party dedicated to a French-only Quebec outside Canada seems rather logical.

There is irony in the story, of course. The irony is that the Liberals call themselves federalists!

DONALD L. HEALY
Melbourne

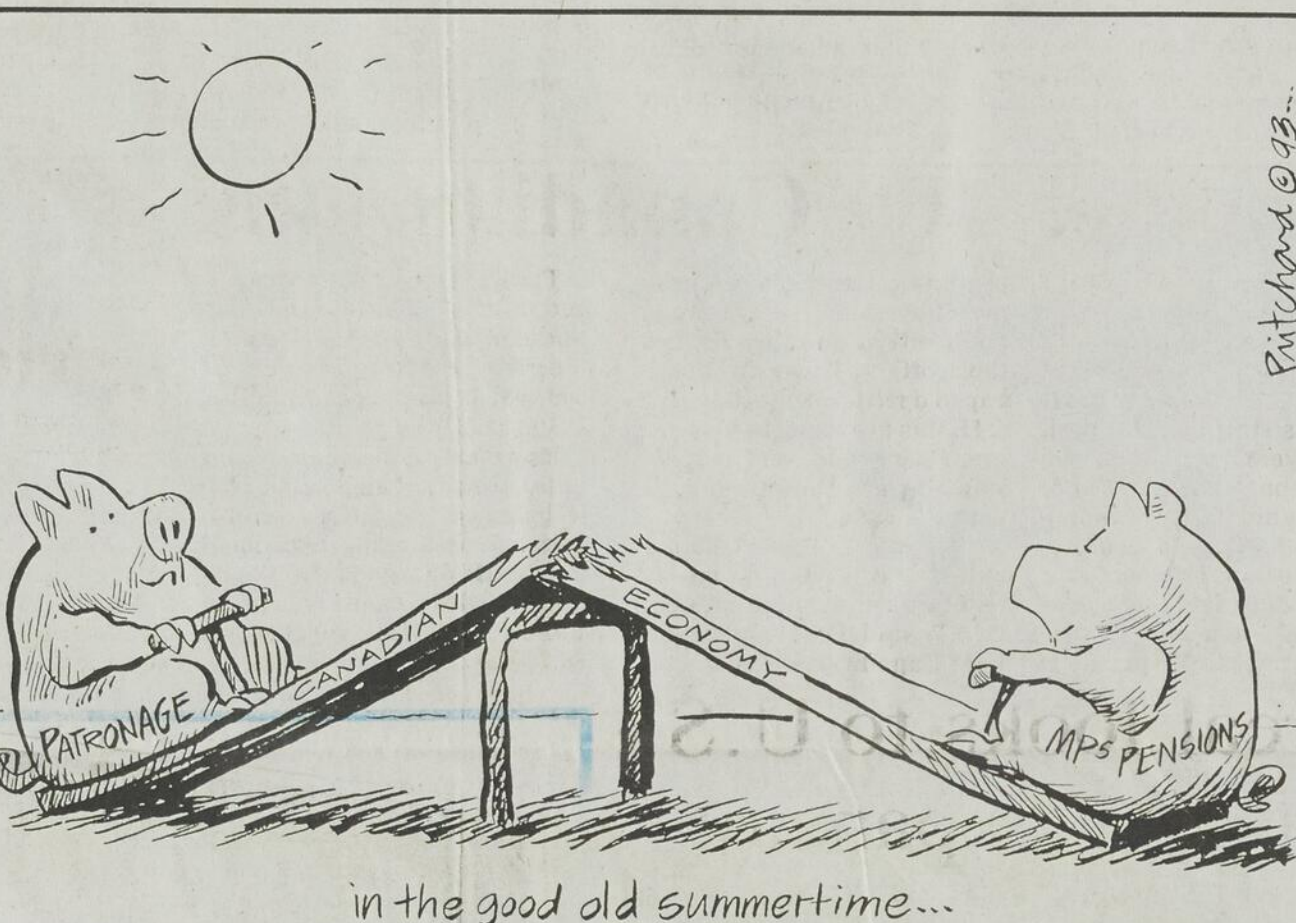
Searching for information

Sent in by:
MILDRED E. WALDRON
P.O. Box 203

Sawyerville, Quebec
JOB 3A0

I am searching for information about my Haseltine ancestry. Benjamin Washington Haseltine died in Ascot Township 23-09-1856. Where was he born? What is his birthdate? What are the names of his parents? What are the names of his siblings? Benjamin was married to Clarissa Caswell; on what date? Orlando, their son, was my grandfather. Who are their other children? Please send replies to:

MRS. SALLY HASELTINE-HARRIS
204 Red Leaf Circle
Anchorage, Alaska
U.S.A. 99504



Town fought racism with war of words

Anti-racist protesters recently trashed the home of a white supremacist in Toronto. That's how some people react to racist groups. But a more peaceful approach has worked for other communities.

By Leslie Simpson
Kitchener-Waterloo Record

KITCHENER, Ont. (CP) — A community can get inspiration from one tiny Ontario village that fought racism with a war of words.

It was a poster campaign that drove armed, neo-Nazi cross-burners out of Minden.

The retirement village that wanted no part of the white supremacist movement found itself in 1989 facing the same racist recruiting tactics and hate literature that community leaders and educators elsewhere would like to see eliminated.

No town or city is alone in being targeted for recruitment by the white supremacist, skinhead and neo-Nazi movements.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The Heritage Front sponsored a rock concert recruitment drive in north Toronto recently, where the lyrical repertoire included such songs as "Nigger, nigger, nigger, out, out, out."

Last month, members of the Ku Klux Klan — many in long white robes and conical hats — burned five crosses near London, Ont.

The group, which included about 40 men, women and children, gathered in Hyde Park, an affluent rural community northwest of London. There was no aggressive community campaign against them.

But the situation was different in Minden, a village east in prime cottage country that was formerly best known for having twice the provincial average of retirees and a sled dog derby in January.

What united the neo-Nazis who piled into a bus bound for the village in the summer of 1989 was a costume and creed of hate: the army-style camouflage clothing, the swastika tattoos and the oversized hunting knives worn on the hip.

The imposing brushcut crew in army green was geared up for a cross-burning and patrolled the heavily treed home of the man who had invited them to celebrate white power on Canada Day: John Beattie, the former head of the Nazi party of Canada.

SIMPLE STRATEGY

But what drove the group and their self-described "Fuehrer" out of Minden was a simple strategy designed by Kitchener-born Jack Brezina, publisher of the independent weekly, the Minden Times, his editor, Russ Duhaine and United Church Rev. Ed Moll.

Professional anti-racist activists in the United States and Canada point to Minden, whose population swells to 2,000 residents in the summer, as a symbol of how people can fight back when hate comes to town.

"I felt the paper had to respond," said Brezina. "You've just got to stand up and fight back."

He designed a free, tabloid-size poster that was tucked into the independent weekly with a circulation of 4,000.

The poster consisted of an oversized red YES and below in black print it read: "As a citizen of Canada, and a member of this community I believe in equality of all individuals regardless of race, color, creed, religion or ethnic origin."

"Some people were afraid the Nazis would come through and smash their windows. People were afraid," said Duhaine, when asked about local reaction to the poster campaign.

"But once some shop owners had the courage to put them up, the posters were plastered everywhere."

A spontaneous coalition formed that included people who had written letters to the editor, members of the United Church and the local branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, which recommended Beattie be stripped of his membership.

MESSAGE GOT THROUGH
"I'm sure the message got through loud and clear," said Brezina.

A second neo-Nazi rally planned for later that summer was cancelled. Beattie left town.

Anti-racism activists say sometimes it doesn't take much to pull in the welcome mat and drive racists out.

"The racists are like roaches. You turn on the light and they go scurrying away," said Loretta Ross, national program director of the Atlanta-based Centre for Democratic Renewal.

"These groups (whether they call themselves neo-Nazis, white supremacists or skinheads) operate best under a cloak of silence."

The Centre for Democratic Renewal is a private research centre that organizes communities against the white supremacist movement. Funded by donations and its own publications, the non-profit centre organizes both those who are victimized by hate crime, and the young people who are often recruited.

"We say that you have to inoculate a community against racism. We call racism a virus, because if you don't stop it, it grows and grows and grows," said Ross, who spends some of her time helping people who have chosen to leave the hate movement.

SIMPLE TACTICS

What may seem surprising is that when fighting back against armed hate groups — many of whom view their criminal records as a kind of counter-culture resume — the tactics are simple. Although there is debate among

people in the anti-racist movement over the most effective strategy, many rely on the old-fashioned tools of neighborhood organization: petitions, poster and telephone campaigns, youth forums and public education.

When Rejeanne Salvail, for example, the mayor of Ste-Anne-Sorel, Que., heard her town had been chosen for a white supremacist weekend rally in 1992, she generated a campaign to ignite public opinion and started a petition. At the last minute, the group moved the event to another town.

Many people involved in the anti-racist movement are focusing on youth because it is often on school playgrounds that white supremacists begin recruiting campaigns.

The Atlanta Neighbors Network, a volunteer organization, takes a two-pronged approach by helping teenagers organize anti-racist forums, assisting victims of hate and helping teenagers leave the hate movement.

The latter is not always as easy as it sounds.

SENSE OF POWER

The white supremacist movement is "enticing" to many alienated teenagers because of what it provides: a sense of power, belonging and no need for any particular skill.

"You just have to have white skin and you're in," said Marcy Louca, the network's executive director.

Because many teenagers leaving hate groups risk losing that sense of power and belonging and an entire circle of friends, the network moves in by linking the teens with other teens in the anti-racist movement.

"These kids are not learning about segregation or the Holocaust at school," said Louca, who contends that the education system has a big "denial" problem when it comes to racism.