

Sign up and make a difference

Have you ever been a "card-carrying" member of a political party? Apart from casting a vote in an election, one thing an ordinary citizen can do to get involved in the political process is to join a party. It looks like we will be going to the polls in a federal election by this time next year. Party platforms are being fine-tuned and you don't have to go far to read the proposals of the various party leaders. If you had been a party member, and if you had been part of an active riding association, you might have had some input into policy. It's never too late.

In the past few years, we have been witness to the birth of a number of political movements. In less than a decade in Quebec, we have seen the birth and death of the Unity Party, the birth and decline of the Equality Party, the birth of Mario Dumont's Parti d'Action Démocratique and the Bloc Québécois, the near death of the Conservatives and we have observed the antics of the far off Reform Party. We make the Americans, with mainly Democrats and Republicans, look downright boring!

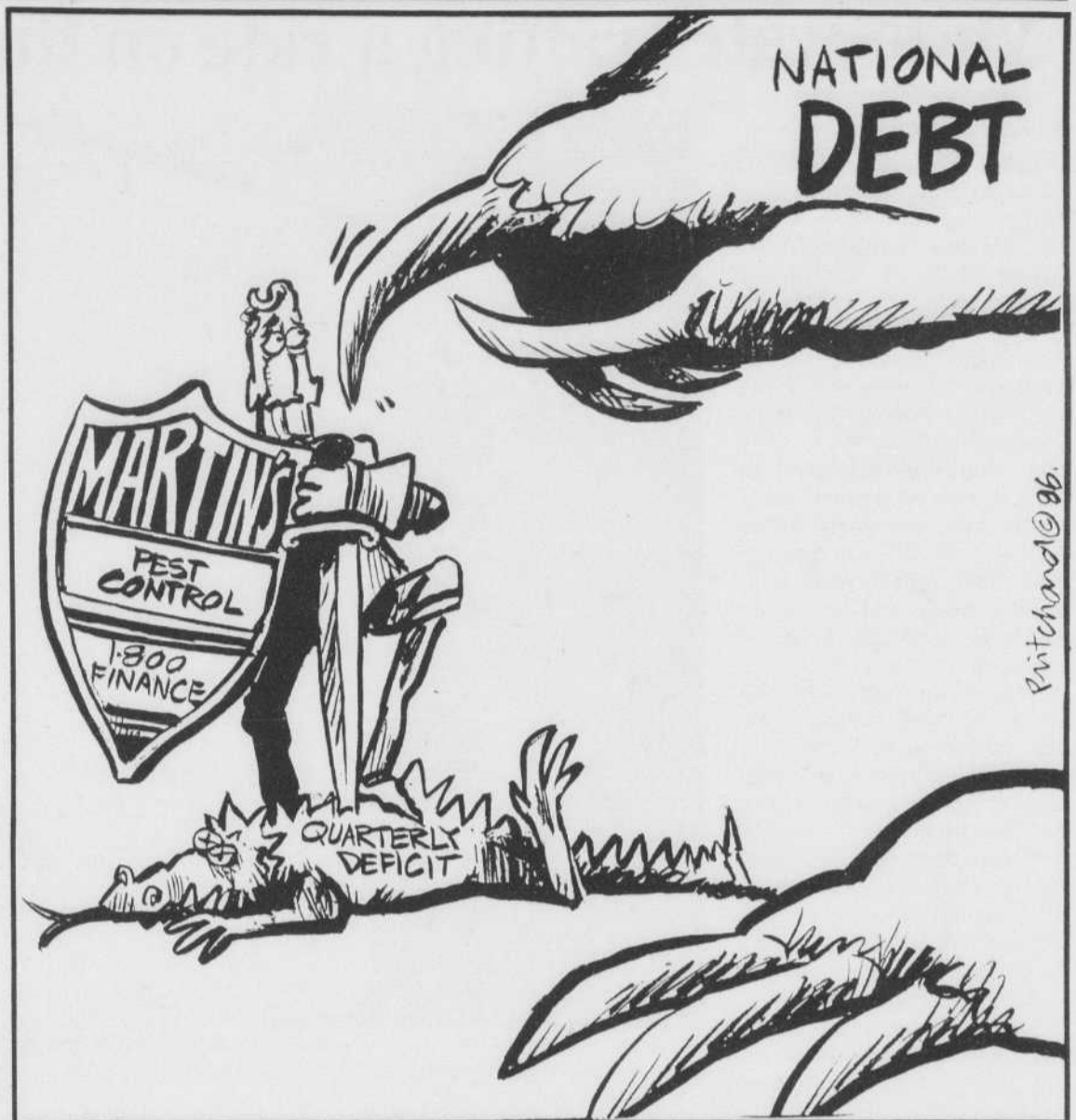
No matter what the origin, all political parties have some things in common: one is a need for money. Given the widely dispersed population in this province and country, merely sending information out or buying publicity, or travelling to meetings is costly. Political parties raise money in any of a number of ways: by selling memberships, collecting donations, having party dignitaries attend cocktail parties for a fee, by having fundraising banquets, golf tournaments and so on. When you contribute to a recognized political party, you get a healthy credit for income tax purposes.

Quebec has one of the more "democratic" systems for financing political parties and candidates. In provincial elections, corporations are not permitted to make donations to political parties or individuals seeking election and there is a ceiling on donations individuals may make to various parties. Not so on the federal scene.

Another thing parties have in common is a need for members. Long established parties usually have membership lists from years past and organizers they can call upon on short notice. These people form a network which can be activated at election or referendum time. The backbone of the network is the riding association, one for each party in each of the 75 federal ridings and 125 provincial ridings. Who can forget the role the Parti Québécois network played in helping to get the Bloc Québécois elected in the last election? Individuals too can show their muscle. Who can forget how individuals all over the country sent a clear message to the Conservative party in 1993?

Most party rules do not allow you to be member of more than one political party at a time. When you join a party, you sign a membership form and pay a minimal fee (around five dollars). You can be a member of a federal party as well as a provincial party but not a member of two provincial parties. Most parties have permanent offices in each province. So there you are, new political activist, go out and join up.

HEATHER KEITH-RYAN



Letters to the Editor

A trail by many other names

Dear Editor,

As a director on the board of Sentier Massawippi, I agree entirely with the sentiments expressed by my friend Jason Krpan on the naming of our property "The Tomifobia Nature Trail" (Nov. 15).

I'm ashamed to admit that calling it a "nature trail" was indeed a pathetic attempt to flush out the "eco-perverts" lurking the back alleys of

Ayer's Cliff and Stanstead. One even told me she saw a pair of Black Billed cuckoos, mating. Really!

At our next meeting, I shall put forth a motion to re-name this trail and to call it the Jason Krpan Memorial Trail.

Jason is to contact us immediately should he feel the least bit unwell.

GEORGE FOSTER
Ways Mills

To beat or not to beat

To the Editor,

Hello. Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada states that parents and teachers can use reasonable force to discipline a child.

This law allows adults to spank and hit infants, children and teenagers. Many claim this law needs to be removed from our Criminal Code as a necessary step in changing traditions in an effort to face the problem of child abuse. Others say this law needs to be upheld to protect traditional values.

I am collecting the opinions, feelings and experiences of Canadian people on this matter. If you would like to share anything with me in an effort to help me and Canada face this current issue, I would appreciate hearing from you. Please indicate your age, whether you are female or male, whether or not you wish to be quoted in this national study, and if so, whether or not you wish to remain anonymous. Otherwise, only I will read, and respectfully, what you send me. For more information on Section 43, please include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Thank you. I look forward to hearing from you. Please send your submissions to:

TONY MAJOR

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Victoria, B.C.
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Apology

Missing context

In an opinion piece entitled 'Lack of student involvement is alarming', which appeared in our Nov. 15 issue, a guest columnist from Bishop's University in Lennoxville was critical of fellow students for failing to react to campus issues which concern them. He included on his list of significant issues the rehiring of Tom Nowers, the dean of student affairs at Bishop's, whom he described as 'unpopular' on campus. The writer failed to mention why Mr. Nowers or his policies were unpopular with students. Without providing readers with a context for the criticism, Mr. Nowers name should not have been mentioned. *The Record* apologizes to Mr. Nowers and his family for any embarrassment or inconvenience the article may have caused.