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Green Party: Grass roots politics

by Julie Rosenberg

Inspired by a dream of a society in harmony with nature, Phil Burpee is making his first foray into politics by trying to organize a Maritime branch of the Green Party of Canada.

Burpee, Maritime co-ordinator for the party, said the group is philosophically aligned with similar groups in West Germany and other European countries which advocate nuclear disarmament and better environmental management.

The Canadian version of the Green Party, founded earlier this year in British Columbia, has more than 130 member so far and offices in Vancouver and Toronto.

Burpee hopes the Greens will eventually form a provincial party in Nova Scotia, but doesn't expect anything will happen "flash-fire."

"Maritimers have traditionally supported Conservative governments," he said.

Burpee describes the party as a grass-roots organization concerned with the arms race, the current economic system, exploitation of natural resources and the protection of fundamental human rights.

"The Greens first priority is that all nuclear weapons be removed from the country and Canada be made a nuclear-free zone," Burpee says.

On this platform the party ran



four candidates in the May 5 general election in British Columbia, gathering about 3,000 votes.

The group, already registered federally, is forming a national party to run candidates in the next federal election. Plans are underway for a founding convention in Ottawa Nov. 3-5 to draft a constitution for the Green Party.

Burpee said the key to Green politics is decentralization.

"The Green Party wants to reverse the democratic process where power emanates from the top to the bottom," he said. "People shouldn't have to feel

that the democratic process (voting) is a 30 second process."

Ken Persau, spokesperson for the Coalition Against Nuclear War, says there may be a future for the Green party in Atlantic Canada.

"The ultimate success of the Green Party in the Maritimes depends on how well the movement addresses issues peculiar to this area," said Persau.

"How the Green movement positions itself on such issues as social and political changes, regional disparities, native questions and issues of the environment, without imposing changes in life-style, will mean the difference between success and failure," Persau said.

He said there are many environmental issues the Greens will need to represent. Uranium mining, the establishment of nuclear plants and the recent herbicide case are examples.

Another key issue the party will need to address is the protection of human rights.

Persau sees clear signs of movement towards a Green Party. More people in the Maritimes are becoming involved in environmental issues and coming together in coalition-federations, said Persau.

"Be it ever so distant, there is a Green Party on the horizon," he said.

Bad writer's fee on the way

EDMONTON (CUP)—Nobody will take responsibility for the writing incompetence of high school graduates but first year students at the University of Alberta pay for the consequences. Literally pay.

Writing competency tests have been made mandatory at the U of A for all first year students who do not have transfer credits. Students who do not pass the \$15 exam are required to take a \$60 remedial writing course.

Barbara Donaldson, Student Union vice-president academic, says the Public School Board should pay for the program.

"I think by funding the program, they would be admitting their incompetency in the teaching of English," said Donaldson.

She said the Minister of Education refused to fund the program when approached by the university administration.

University VP Academic George Baldwin said the university does not lay blame on any

particular institution on students' writing incompetency.

"After all, we prepare the teachers so we may be partially to blame for the writing deficiency," he said.

Mary Jo Williams of the Alberta Teachers Association said there is no evidence that the quality of writing has gone down. She said because more students are entering university, a larger proportion have weak writing skills.

"Let's face it," said Williams, "whereas much of the education in the past has been devoted to writing and literature, today this is not so. The needs of society have dictated the teaching of skills involving listening, viewing and speaking."

The fight against porn

SUDBURY (CUP)—Laurentian University students have successfully fought the screening of the Playboy channel in the student pub.

In a letter that says the Playboy channel "legitimizes the objectification of women and promotes the devaluation of female sexuality," a group of irate students asked services director Romeo Bertoli to change the channel. And he did.

Bertoli says he chose the First Choice channel "right out of the blue" and did not know it carried pornography. He insists he was not trying to solicit more pub business.

The protest letter was signed

by about 100 members of the university community.

Meanwhile, at Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia the student union has taken disciplinary action against two employees after hard core pornographic films were shown at a stag party in the student union building.

One employee was suspended without pay for two weeks and another was put on three-month probation.

In B.C., students have been fighting to remove pornography from bookstores at the University of B.C. and Simon Fraser University, but so far administrations there have not responded to letters and petitions.