

*Vapaus* (Freedom) of the FOC and *Vapaa Sana* of the more moderates. The founding editor of *Vapaa Sana* Rheinold Pehkonen had worked in *Vapaus* before the split of the Finnish scene in the early 1930s and knew the colleagues. But as Lauri Toiviainen, the long-standing editor of *Vapaa Sana* writes in his history of the paper, *Vapaa Sana* stopped writing about the “other side” in the 1960s. This meant that new arrivals possibly did not even learn about the parallel Finnish scene. A joke has it that a Finn once took a taxi to make it in time to the Finnish theatre in Toronto. The cab driver did reach a Finnish theatre, but one the customer had not meant – and had not even heard about.

During my first weeks at *Vapaa Sana* several persons advised me in passing to avoid contact with the “left,” at least beyond the casual level. This was tricky, as some of these people were among those who had given me that unexpected opportunity to work in Canada and had gone through the difficult process of obtaining a work permit. After some weeks of talking to a wide array of people, I decided to test the ground.

As one of the first measures, the Finnish Organization of Canada was included in the Directory of Finnish Associations published in *Vapaa Sana* and was thus given a public existence on this side of the invisible frontier. From the Midsummer 2006 event at Wanup, *Vapaa Sana* also started covering FOC events. The policy change was within my rights as the Editor, and no grumblings from the Board reached me – although I heard the new arrangements had been debated.

There was positive feedback from a number of readers, who said that the paper was now covering “things they had never heard about.” Such statements were not just platitudes, as the exclusion of the “other side” had indeed become dense over the years.

It is probably correct to conclude that the collective demonization of the FOC had been partially caused by “peer pressure.” It was a vicious

circle maintained by some community leaders with little general backing at this stage. I was also told that if a locally recruited editor had enacted the change, the reaction would have been hard. But I came from the outside.

Until the FOC appeared in the *Vapaa Sana* Directory, the only national organization listed had been the Finnish-Canadian Cultural Federation, the organizer of the annual festival (suurjuhlat). The FOC had for decades tried to become a member, but had always been rejected. Even as late as 1994 *Vapaa Sana* had reported that the Cultural Federation could not admit the “communist” FOC.

Still, the situation had already started to change. In the 1980s, the FOC had contributed financially to a senior citizens’ residential project in Toronto. In return, seniors from an FOC background had been admitted as residents. In 2000, Hans Myrskog, organizer of the Toronto FinnGrandFest

had shown vision and included FOC persons “as individuals” in some functions. For example, the chairman of the FOC, Elsie Joki-

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Interestingly, the political divisions hardly existed on the Finnish scene in Quebec. The main reason may be that after the introduction of the language laws Quebec lost much of its Finnish population as many chose to move to Ontario. Those who remained were well-integrated into Quebec and Canada and were not driven by intra-Finnish Canadian politics.