

The Dominion

CANADA'S GRASSROOTS NATIONAL NEWSPAPER • AUGUST 22, 2003 • DOMINIONPAPER.CA

Iceland Returns to Whaling

Iceland has decided to risk its reputation and its tourism industry to begin whaling again, a practice it had stopped since 1989. The move comes amid protests from conservation and animal rights organizations.

The government of Iceland has defended the move, saying that the harvest of 38 minke whales is required for scientific data. Stefen Asmundsson, the country's whaling commissioner, said, "It's obvious to anyone that whales are very big animals and they eat a lot—a lot of fish. Precisely the effect they are having on fish stocks around Iceland, we don't know. We need better data". In particular, there is concern that regional cod stocks are threatened.

Leading the charge against the whaling expedition is the International Fund for Animal Welfare. IFAW spokesperson, Gill Sanders said in a press release that, "Iceland's return to this cruel and needless slaughter flies in the face of decades of international conservation efforts". The press release goes on to state that, "Iceland's international credibility and economy may be among the ultimate victims. The country has whaled in the past but was forced to give up its practice in 1989 after an international boycott targeted Icelandic fishing products, a move that could very well be repeated.

Although Iceland is now a member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the move to kill 38 minke whales will not result in their expulsion. A



Minke whales are being hunted by Icelandic whalers for "scientific purposes". *International Fund for Animal Welfare*

legal loophole allows countries to whale for scientific purposes, something Norway and Japan uses to harvest as many as 500 whales per year. (BBC, IFAW)—LESLIE BUCKLE

Allies Losing on all Fronts in Iraq

Until August 18th, 2003 the United Nations had been spared any of the hostility reserved for the armies of the US and its partners. Not any longer. The recent blast demonstrates that any foreign nation(s) that involve themselves in Iraq face potentially deadly consequences. Further, as the US has had months to assuage local concerns, international relations experts are beginning to doubt Washington's ability to save its sinking foreign policy in Iraq. Even UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that the bombing in Baghdad is "also a setback politically for the UN mission".

At home, Americans seem

to be increasingly concerned about government forays in the Middle East. A recent poll shows that support for the military initiative has fallen off from a high of about 80% at the start of the conflict, to approximately 61% in late August. (BBC)—MICHAEL HUNTER

Rumsfeld's Visit a Costly One

When US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, visited Columbia on August 19th, 2003, as many as 13,000 police officers and soldiers were assigned to ensure his safety for the short eight hour stay. The trip was part of a two day visit to the region, which also included a stop in Honduras.

Rumsfeld was in Columbia to provide some support for the country's anti drug campaign. The Columbians have drawn up a wish list of further aid that would help, such as real time satellite information. It is

thought that the Bush administration will look favorably upon the requests; guerillas currently hold three US intelligence operatives who were captured when their plane crashed in rebel territory.

Over the past four years, the US has invested nearly \$3B in Plan Columbia which is designed to reduce drug flow from that country—much of which ends up on US streets. (BBC, *El Colombiano*)—MICHAEL HUNTER

North Koreans Starving?

While it has a million soldiers making up just one component of a robust military, its own satellite launching system and the ability to organize mass demonstrations on cue, North Korea is facing serious domestic problems with the coming winter.

In the North Korean Capital of Pyongyang, grocery stores have little merchandise for sale and there seems to be a lack of food generally. Elevators are without power across the country and there is scarce heating fuel available in a nation where the temperature drops to -20 Celsius.

Part of this is due the isolation that N. Korea has imposed on itself, part of it due to international ostracism from the state's refusal to adopt the capitalist economic system. The effects are now approaching a critical stage. Hundreds of thousands of North Koreans could freeze or starve before the upcoming winter is over. (*Jane's Information Group, BBC, US State Dept.*)—LESLIE BUCKLE

Fredericton Political Prisoner Freed

A Fredericton activist imprisoned for 18 days in Montreal following a mass arrest during last month's World Trade Organization (WTO) protest was denied a "most basic right" by the municipal judge who oversaw bail hearings for 120 anti-WTO protesters, a Superior Court judge ruled last week. Municipal Court Judge Denis Laberge should not have denied Vaughn Barnett's motion to present evidence in his own defence during his July 29 bail hearing, Justice James Brunton ruled in the August 15 review of Barnett's hearing.

"It's the most basic of rights of anyone brought before the courts that they are allowed to make proof of their position," Brunton stated before the court, explaining that the Crown should have been required to present evidence to justify Barnett's further incarceration and that Barnett should have been provided space to present evidence in his own defence. In his ruling, Brunton erased most of Barnett's conditions and waived Barnett's \$200 bail - not because the defendant vowed not to pay, but because the Crown's case against him was "weak". Barnett said he feels vindicated by Brunton's decision.

"I shouldn't have been in prison at all, but I chose to be so that I wouldn't have to sign bail conditions that would compromise my constitutional rights and put me in a position of cooperating with what I consider to be fundamentally unjust institutions," Barnett told *The Dominion* shortly after his release. "The bail conditions were arbitrarily imposed on me and I considered that to be an extension of the unlawful process that started with the false arrest of almost 200 people in the green zone at the WTO protest." Barnett points to the continual arrests of people like Jaggi Singh and Aaron Koleszar as an argument against activists signing away their rights for a conditional release.



Protesters arrested during demonstrations in Montreal were effectively forced to give up the right to protest through strict bail conditions. *Quebec Indymedia*

"An activist could be falsely arrested at one demonstration, be subjected to several bail conditions limiting his or her ability to protest later, and if the person tries to attend another demonstration the police can haul him or her into court and use those bail conditions against that person, claiming that the conditions were breached," he said. "Eventually, the activist is caged within these restrictions simply by being persistent and exercising basic constitutional rights."

Barnett, a legal advocate and researcher with a law degree, represented himself in court with assistance from Montreal lawyer, Denis Poitras. His trial is set for October 21.

Barnett was held for 42 days in a Quebec prison following the Summit of the Americas protest in 2001 under similar circumstances.—DARON LETTS

Blackout Raises Questions

The recent massive power outage in Ontario and several northern US states lit the way for more than just a boost to the candlemaking industry. It has given a boost to conservation groups and public hydro advocates as their arguments are made for them.

First Energy, a private firm based in Ohio, is at the centre of the storm surrounding the blackout which put close to 50-million North Americans in darkness Thursday. The

National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) claims First Energy has a track record of safety and operational problems, citing an ABC News report that in 2002 First Energy had reduced staff significantly and had briefly shut down its Ohio nuclear reactor for significant safety violations. First Energy also failed to report a problem hours before the blackout that could have given warning to a number of other utility companies, which could have prevented or lessened the blackout. As a private firm, it is not required to do so.

Concerns over rising energy demands have sparked calls for conservation. Premier Ernie Eves said the province will be scarcely be able to meet energy demands, and called for a fifty percent reduction in electricity usage on Sunday, which brought many businesses to a halt including the steel and auto industries, two of Ontario's biggest. High temperatures early in the week caused energy consumption to rise from a peak of 18,270 megawatts Monday to a Tuesday peak of 19,198 megawatts.—NOEL BALDWIN

Martin Calls Civil Unions "Acceptable"

As Paul Martin gets closer to becoming Prime Minister, concerns about the fate of the same-sex marriage bill due come before parliament shortly increase. Martin recently spoke about the same-sex marriage issue saying that civil unions would be acceptable, as distinct

from marriage as prescribed in the Ontario Supreme Court ruling from earlier this summer. Toronto statistics show that between June 10 and July 15 same-sex marriage licences made up 12% of the licences issued, but with public opinion moving closer to 50-50 many MPs are shifting away from supporting the bill. Websites devoted to tracking how MPs are currently lined up to vote show 146 in favour and 155 against. This has prompted advocacy groups to launch lobbying efforts to ensure the passage of the bill. Failure of the bill would not change the law established by the courts in Ontario and BC freeing gays and lesbians to marry, but the political message would be unfavourable.

—NOEL BALDWIN

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Americans Used Biological Weapons in Korean War

Stephen Endicott and Edward Hagerman, two Canadian historians who spent five years investigating declassified archives in China, Canada and the US—in addition to conducting extensive interviews and field work—concluded that the US had been actively developing biological weapons since the end of World War II. According to the two historians, the US tested these weapons by bombing parts of North Korea and China with anthrax, encephalitis and other diseases in early 1952.

—**Faiza Rady**, “Beyond a reasonable doubt”. Appeared in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, April 2000.

Bush Rebuffed “Sunshine Policy”

North Korea’s nuclear program had been more or less contained in 1994 by the Agreed Framework concluded by the Clinton administration. In the meantime, President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea had engaged in a sunshine policy, and it began to bear fruit. There was progress in removing land mines along the border, and a direct train connection was about to be opened. The North Korean leadership seemed to become increasingly aware that it needed economic reforms.

When Kim Dae Jung came to Washington as the first foreign head of state to visit President Bush, he wanted to enlist the president’s support for the sunshine policy. But Bush rebuffed him rather brusquely and publicly. Bush disapproved of what he regarded as the appeasement of North Korea, and he was eager to establish a discontinuity with the Clinton administration. He also needed North Korea out in the cold in order to justify the first phase of the National Missile Defense program, the initial linchpin in the Bush strategy of asserting U.S. supremacy.



A US bomb hits a North Korean building in 1950. US pilots were said to complain of a lack of remaining targets; between 400,000 and one million North Korean civilians were killed. *US National Archives*

Then came the “axis of evil” speech, and when North Korea surprised the Bush administration by admitting its uranium-enrichment program (strictly speaking not in violation of the Agreed Framework because that covered only plutonium), Bush cut off the supply of fuel oil. North Korea responded with various provocations.

—**George Soros**, “America’s Global Role: Why the Fight for a Worldwide Open Society Begins at Home”, from *American Prospect*, June 2003.

US Violated Framework Agreement

[T]he North has every reason to fault U.S. compliance with the [Framework Agreement]. The reactors were supposed to be built by 2003. Yet, in large measure because the U.S. hoped that North Korea would collapse from economic problems before that date, it did little to ensure a timely construction schedule. In fact the concrete foundation for the first reactor was not poured until August 2002.

The U.S. has also taken no

meaningful steps to normalize relations. As a result, the heavy military pressure and economic embargo greatly add to North Korea’s considerable economic difficulties. In fact, the failure of the U.S. to live up to its side of the agreement is highlighted by the fact that North Korea’s current demands are no different from what it was promised in 1994: normalization of relations and a guarantee that it will not be threatened with military attack by the U.S. [...]

The Bush administration has worked hard to maintain the North as an enemy because it serves U.S. policy interests to do so. One of Bush’s earliest and most important policy objectives was the creation of a national missile defense system, an objective strongly endorsed by the military industrial complex. He justified the building of this expensive system largely with reference to the existence of a North Korean threat.

Immediately upon coming to office, Bush made it clear that he viewed North Korea as a terrorist state and felt no obligation to comply with the terms of the framework agreement. He also strongly rebuked South Korean

president Kim Dae Jung for his reconciliation efforts, which had produced an historic June 2000 summit meeting in Pyongyang with Kim Jong Il, the leader of North Korea.

—**Martin Hart-Landsberg**, “Korea: Crisis and Opportunity”. Published in *Against the Current*, April 2003.

Korean Unification a Threat to US Interests

At a distance, [US elites] see the Far Eastern region, the united Korean peninsula, Japan, and China, as a combination that could be deadly if it ever got together economically, politically, and militarily. They fear that if this happened, within ten years this area would become economically hegemonic. Thus, American strategic policy is designed to keep these countries separate from each other. That’s why the Bush regime is now trying to stop Korean reunification because they are fearful that a unified Korean peninsula with nuclear weapons would make the Japanese go for nuclear weapons. Then you would have three nuclear powers in the region: Japan, Korea, and China. If that happened, I think they would try and make them fight each other because they are really fearful of a link-up in this region. That would severely threaten their interests. [...]

In the middle of the last century, you have the Korean War—a three-year war fought by the United States under the banner of the United Nations, in the course of which the industrially strong part of Korea, which was the north, is completely devastated. Not a single building was left standing. Its entire infrastructure was destroyed.

—**Tariq Ali**, in an interview with David Barsamian in *Z Magazine*, April 2003.

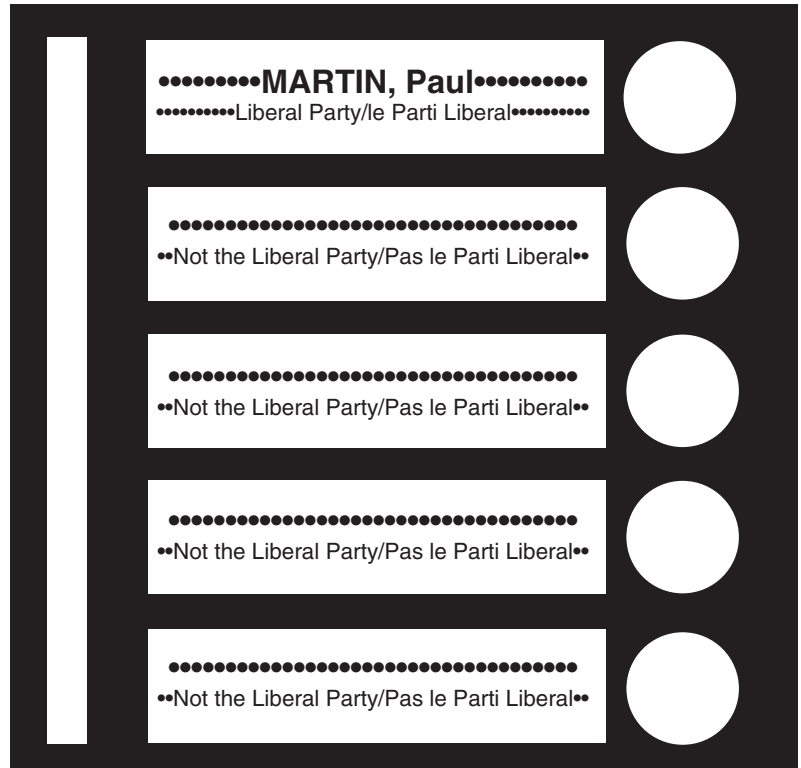
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How the Liberal Party Works

We hold elections, but do our political parties practice democracy?

by Dru Oja Jay

In November 2003, Paul Martin will—barring unimaginable circumstances—be chosen as Canada’s next Prime Minister. Legally and politically, this choice is not made by the Canadian public at large, but rather by a private club known as the Liberal Party of Canada. Even given that the Liberal Party has over 500,000 members (according to recent reports, a larger membership than any political party in Canadian history), most Canadians will not have a say in this decision. Indeed, it is already too late for anyone who wanted to vote in the party’s leadership election—to vote, members had to join by last June. And if you had the foresight to join the party four months before the election, you also have to pay a membership fee, and be prepared for a potentially long journey on voting day in order to cast a ballot.



Is this what Canadian democracy looks like?

Why is everyone so sure that Paul Martin will win the leadership? Allan Rock and Brian Tobin, considered contenders early on, were so sure of a Martin victory that they dropped out months ago. But few would argue that Martin’s *policy positions* are responsible for his apparent lock on the position of party leader; even today, very few people know what his positions are on many issues.

By most accounts, the real source of Martin’s dominance lies in his control over the internal governance of the Liberal party, as well as his spectacular fundraising (Martin has raised over \$6 million to date for his leadership bid). Over the last two years, a well organized campaign has put loyal Martin supporters in charge of most riding associations. Once in control, Martin and his supporters could effectively decide who got to join the party, and when. In many ridings, leadership candi-

dates were only given five membership forms at a time, while Martin supporters were free to bypass this limit. These restrictions were later loosened, but only after Rock, Tobin and others had dropped out of the leadership race (or refrained from joining in the first place).

In view of the struggles for control of riding associations, it would seem that policy debate has played a minor, or even insignificant, role in the Liberal leadership race. But if the future Prime Minister is not chosen based on policy positions, but rather on the ability to gain control of riding associations, and given the apparent entrenchment of the Liberals, does Canadian democracy consist merely in voting for or against the Liberal Party?

According to Dr. William Cross, the Director of the Canadian Democratic Audit and a professor of Political Science

at Mount Allison University, Martin didn’t do anything wrong, but simply played by the rules as they exist.

The same rules (or lack thereof) exist for other political parties in Canada as well. Though other parties have not recently experienced the intense and public squabbles over the control of riding associations, their leadership is largely decided by who can sign up the largest number of new members. This in turn is largely determined by who is the most organized and best funded. Few were surprised, then, to see Jack Layton (who had the most funding and signed up thousands of new members) chosen as the leader of the NDP, and Peter Mackay chosen to lead the Progressive Conservatives. Of course, neither MacKay nor Layton were handed the job of Prime Minister upon their election.

Cross argues that “a more democratic system would be to allow all interested and eligible voters to vote for who will be the next Prime Minister.” This would involve eliminating the barriers to wide involvement in the leadership election of (at least) the governing party. Instead of an election where only those who have joined before a deadline, paid a fee, and travelled to the (often distant) voting location, Cross advocates what is essentially a US-style primary: all eligible voters would be able to vote for a candidate for Prime Minister.

As it stands, participation rates in leadership selection are very low. Surveys have found that even among supporters of a party, less than 5% participate. Cross cites the election in which Ralph Klein was chosen as the leader of the provincial Conservatives in Alberta as the closest thing to an open leadership con-

test that has occurred in Canada. Voters had to be a member of the provincial party, but they could join at the voting location for a minimal \$5 fee. Close to 17% of party supporters turned out for the election, and when the contest went to a second ballot, the number of participants increased.

Asked about the possibility of other parties or groups hijacking a leadership election by mobilizing members to skew the vote a certain way, Cross simply says that there is little evidence of that occurring. On the other hand, the Liberal party spends enough time obsessing about "special interests" hijacking candidate nominations in particular ridings (restrictions placed on distribution of membership forms were justified in this light by the Martin camp) that it's worth asking if the leadership selection process should be more open, not less.

The US-style primary has its own faults, however. South of the border, it is commonly referred to as the "money primary", a reference to the fact that—with very few exceptions—the candidate who raises the most money wins. This, however, would seem to be a question of campaign finance regulation and balanced media coverage. The broader point, according to Cross, is that candidates are forced to appeal to more than a tiny fraction of the electorate. Despite its flaws, the popular election of party leaders (or minimally, Prime Ministers) would at least be successful in moving the focus of leadership campaigns from party power struggles to reaching out to the public at large.

But to Cross, what some have called the "democratic deficit" occurs at a more fundamental level. Elections are considered private events of the Liberal Party, a legal status that means that there is almost no regulation of the process. Spending limits on leadership campaigns, for example, are set and (nominally) enforced by the party. But the enforcement hardly ever comes. It is

extremely unlikely, for example, that the Liberal party will deny the leadership to a candidate who goes over internally-set spending limits, and there is no legal recourse—the only option is to appeal to the same riding associations that Martin currently controls. Indeed, it is only with recent legislation on campaign financing (bill C-24) that leadership candidates were required to fully disclose the sources of funding for intra-

Selection of candidates in federal elections regularly happens with 300 or 400 party members voting, in ridings with over 60,000 voters.

party campaigns.

The other democratic short-circuit caused by the private status of political parties is a major concentration of political power in the Prime Minister's office, where, according to Cross, "party members have as much or as little influence on policy as the Prime Minister wants them to have."

One of the less vague planks of Paul Martin's leadership campaign has been to address the "democratic deficit" by giving Members of Parliament more freedom to advance their own views in the House of Commons, and to roll back Chrétien's intensive party discipline in favour of fewer "whipped votes".

Cross says that such measures do little to address the real issues: "that solves the democratic deficit for about 150 Liberal backbench members of Parliament. It's not clear to me that it does anything for the rest of us, because I have no idea what my Liberal candidate thinks about a whole array of policy issues when he or she runs under the Liberal banner, because they don't tell us. They

tell us what the Liberal party view is. When they go to Ottawa, you're going to let them vote however they want, but what check does the voter have on that?"

Very little, it would seem. The selection of candidates in federal elections regularly happens with 300 or 400 party members voting, in ridings with over 60,000 voters. Since candidate nomination is often based on mobilization (i.e. which candidate can bus more members to the voting location) rather than policy, candidates have little or no mandate beyond that of the party line.

According to most evidence, Canadian voters overwhelmingly base their choice on the party's leader and platform, rather than individual candidates. As if to confirm this, Prime Minister Chrétien has directly appointed candidates, bypassing the vaguely democratic selection process altogether. In a few instances, "special interest groups" have attempted to use the nomination process to push particular issues, but have been shut out by the Prime Minister's Office. In many instances, "Liberals for Life", a pro-life faction of the Liberal party, attempted to gain nominations, but were shut out by the Prime Minister's Office, which directly appointed its own candidates. When Chrétien chose to directly nominate Art Eggleton in the riding of York Centre, passing over the usual process, veteran city councillor Peter Li Preti sued the Liberal Party to hold the usual nomination process. Because of the Party's effective legal status as a private club, however, he was unsuccessful (though Eggleton was later shuffled out of Cabinet after it was shown that he had given his ex-girlfriend a \$36,000 military contract).

Cross argues that this process also needs to be opened up to all eligible and interested voters. If candidate nomination races were infused with ideas or particular policy stands, "you would end up with candidates selected on their own policy pro-

grams—these would have to be pretty much in tune with the party, but they wouldn't have to be 100% similar to the Prime Minister's views, and they would then have some legitimacy to challenge the Prime Minister and stake out different positions, and the PMO would have to operate in a very different way than it does now."

Given all of the inward turns the power structure of the Liberal Party has taken, and

"[Martin's policy of fewer 'whipped votes'] solves the democratic deficit for about 150 Liberal backbench members of Parliament. It's not clear to me that it does anything for the rest of us."

accepting the Party does not currently appear to be at risk of losing its majority, it is not clear how Canadians can meaningfully participate in the governing of their country. We can vote for the Liberal Party, or against it, but beyond that, things get murky. Anyone who tries to run for nomination as a candidate risks being labelled a "special interest" and being replaced. An appeal to an MP makes little difference, as they have little mandate, and are held in line by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

According to surveys conducted for the Democratic Audit, young people are giving political parties a wide berth. Instead, they believe, special interest groups are the most effective way to be represented politically. Furthermore, those in political parties have an average age of 59, are two thirds male, and tended to join when they were younger. For Cross, this raises a deeper issue: "do you want child care policy, or education policy to be made by these people?"

Is Climate Change Burning up British Columbia?

by Yuill Herbert

Are the forest fires in Western Canada part of climate change? Scientists say that it is likely, and environmental groups are urging Canadians to begin making the connection between the burning forests and the country's rising greenhouse gas emissions.

Dr. Jim Bruce, former Environment Canada scientist, and Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change working group, the United Nations body that studies climate change, warns that, "These forest fires are the kind of thing we expect with a warming climate. While one event does not prove climate change, the overall trend is convincing."

British Columbia is warming up. The Provincial government's state of the environment report indicates a 1.1 degree Celsius increase in average annual temperatures over the course of the last century. The warming climate means more lightning, which ignites forty percent of the fires in British Columbia. Environment Canada expects this summer to be the driest on record. Combined with increased heat, the result is a forest which is tinder dry, an ideal fuel source. Increased wind and heat, which can also be attributed to a warming climate, lead to conditions for ferocious burning. The result is this summer's widespread devastation of the forests and small communities in interior British Columbia.

Dr. Mike Flannigan is a senior scientist at Canadian Forest Service and studies the relationship between forest fires and climate change. "The drought is an unusual extreme event and maybe a glimpse of what the future will be like. I do not expect every year in the future under climate change to be like this one for BC, but we can expect more severe fire seasons in the future"

Dr Flannigan and other sci-



"While one event does not prove climate change, the overall trend is convincing." NASA

entists use complex computer programs and paeleocological data from the bottom of lakes to model climate change. The models paint a stark picture for the future. According to Dr. Flannigan, "recent work suggests that area burned could increase 50 to 100 percent in the next 50 to 100 years. So if we're running around 2.8 million, we could be seeing 4 to 6 million hectares burned annually. So this is a significant increase".

This year, the fire season in British Columbia is far from over, but by mid-August, the province had experienced a two hundred percent increase of area burned over the twenty-year average.

An environmental group in the area impacted, Shuswap Environmental Action Society (SEAS), and the Sierra Club of Canada have issued press releases pointing out that unless society begins to seriously address the use of fossil fuels, fires such as those that have so severely impacted interior communities of British Columbia will become more frequent and more intense. Burning fossil fuels produces the greenhouse gases that are causing the warming climate and thus creating conditions for increasingly severe forest fire seasons.

Environmental groups have

documented the provincial government's failure to take action on climate change at a website called BCfacts.org. In 2002, the British Columbia government lobbied against the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, setting the stage for an ongoing policy that has promoted the fossil fuel industry as a major source of prosperity for the province. The government's goal to double oil and gas production in the province by 2008 will be achieved through measures such as subsidized road construction for exploration, providing \$50,000 tax credits for new coal bed methane wells and reducing regulatory mechanisms. The flagship of this effort is an aggressive campaign to promote offshore oil and gas development. This, in the face of a long standing federal moratorium that was designed to protect the delicate coastal ecosystem. These policy changes will further magnify a trend of increasing greenhouse gas emissions in the province. Between 1990 and 1999, emissions climbed by twenty percent, a rate five to six times greater than the global average.

The fires do not appear to have shifted the government's perspective towards climate change. British Columbia's minister responsible for both science policy and tourism, Rick Thorpe,

was is quoted in Maclean's Magazine as saying: "To say that the fire situation is the result of climate change and that it will be permanent is, in my opinion, naïve."

The effects of climate change continue to be felt around the world, with increasing severity. A death toll of approximately 3000 people due to a heat wave in France comes one year after French President Jacques Chirac's speech at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, "Our house is burning down and we're blind to it...The earth and humankind are in danger and we are all responsible. It is time to open our eyes. Alarms are sounding across all the continents . . . We cannot say that we did not know! Climate warming is still reversible. Heavy would be the responsibility of those who refused to fight it."

As the fires continue to ravage British Columbia, the French President's sentiment is echoed by local environmentalist and SEAS president Jim Cooperman "We call on industry and government to get serious about climate change and the Kyoto process. Citizens can help by pressuring government to take action and by supporting those politicians who are taking action" •••

Photons and Formaldehyde: The New Art-Viewing

by Max Liboiron

In a world where crushed metal, urinals, and stripped paintings all parade under the banner of “fine art”, many have cried out against the alienation of the viewer by contemporary art and art-systems. In reaction to this (or maybe just due to a seemingly inevitable historical trend), a new type of art and art-viewing has arrived, based on the all-too-familiar behaviours of consumerism. Some galleries have adjusted to this new style, and others are struggling to control it.

Not surprisingly, the most famous piece of art in the world is also the most consumed. Sliding into fame thanks to mass mention and production of her image, the Mona Lisa receives 1.5 million visitors every year. These visitors come to see the Original Masterpiece in the same way that others flock to Graceland. (Originality is the basis of tourism). They can be seen walking briskly, then jogging, then *sprinting* (picture it) down the Grande Galerie towards their goal, stopping only when the queue demands it. These visitors display a characteristic behaviour of pilgrims once united with their Object of Reverence; they desire a souvenir or memento that will contain an iota of the experience. Several times a second a flash from a camera goes off, regardless of the signs advising otherwise, the guards outnumbered and ineffective. This act of veneration becomes inappropriate and even grotesque when one stops to consider that every day, billions of powerful photons from the flashes are bludgeoning the Mona Lisa to death. She is looking positively green (the colour of her under-painting showing through) and her cracks are wider and more noticeable than those of her contemporaries. This year is her 500th birthday. I doubt she'll be around for another 500 at this



Erin Brubacher

pace.

The Mona Lisa's stardom has been a sort of happy accident for the Louvre, but some galleries *base* their collections on stardom. London's National Portrait Gallery has the sitter's name—in bold—on the top of the identification card. The artist's name falls somewhere near the bottom, after the medium and dimensions of the piece, as an afterthought (how shocking!). Also treated as secondary are elements of composition and technique—all that humdrum stuff. The visitor's energy is focused on how many names she recognizes, and on putting faces to these names. The gallery is *Vanity Fair* incarnate: it is a market of fame (shop as you please). Wonderfully, there is a portrait of Joan Collins by

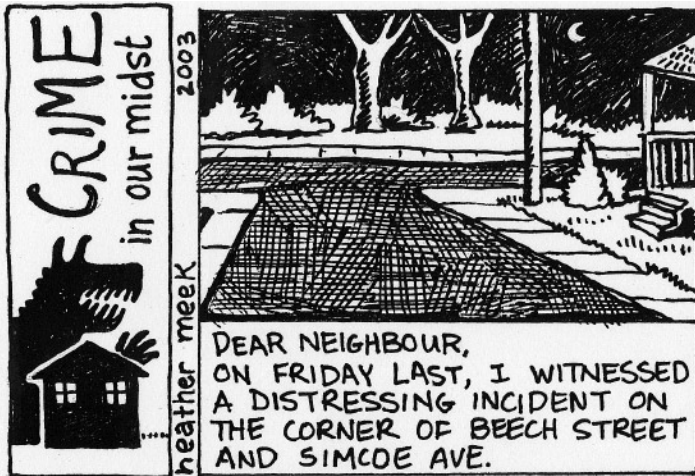
Andy Warhol done in the same style as his screen-printed “Marilyns”. (Incidentally, he also did a screen-print of the Mona Lisa, called “Thirty Are Better than One”.) Warhol made these prints in response to the mass packaging of celebrity images and their subsequent de-personalization and commodification. Whether Warhol made these prints as a critique or celebration is anyone's guess. (A man who sorted his mail by smelling the stamps is hard to understand.) Likewise, it is up to the viewer to decide whether the Portrait Gallery as a whole critiques or celebrates.

Cashing in on celebrity status is also the mainstay of the Saatchi Gallery, whose brand-new location places it smack dab in the middle of a tourist strip in

London. The gallery houses the stars of the “Sensation” exhibit, which was loudly and publicly branded as scandalous by the delicate US media. Now who *wouldn't* want to see what America has labelled indecent?! Most visitors pay their eight pounds to see if the art is really as disturbing as it is reputed to be. The Saatchi Gallery realizes where its marketing power rests; it promises “Unreserved Damien Hirst at the Saatchi Gallery” on tickets and flyers. (Damien Hirst does paintings of coloured dots. Luckily for his career, he also cuts up livestock and puts the pieces in formaldehyde.) Visitors are not disappointed. They see the famous cut-up cow, the black Madonna with vaginas and elephant dung, the portrait of a serial killer painted with children's hand-prints.... But they also see less notorious pieces—good pieces. All of it is quite accessible. The pieces are not in a “white cube”, but in a grand old office building, complete with wood panelling; nor are the pieces behind glass (though you can no more touch these celebrity pieces than you can grab the rear end of a movie star—both have bodyguards). And if you're really feeling alienated by a work, a helpful card beside it will give you justification for its existence. Saatchi, an advertiser and marketer by trade, effectively tricks people into his gallery and then makes them thankful for it.

While these galleries are not collapsing the ranks between “high” and “low” art, they are certainly mixing and matching the traditional audiences that went with those labels. The elite can no longer patronizingly assure the “untutored masses” that the work of the masses is just as good as the work of the elite (no, really, it is. I promise), because now (oh crap!) it's the same work. And those that

continued on page 8 »



DEAR NEIGHBOUR,
ON FRIDAY LAST, I WITNESSED
A DISTRESSING INCIDENT ON
THE CORNER OF BEECH STREET
AND SIMCOE AVE.



I WAS AWAKENED AT 1:20 AM. BY A GANG
OF TEENS WHO WERE DESTROYING A BED
OF NEW-GUINEA IMPATIENS. FROM MY VER-
ANDA, I INFORMED THEM THEY WERE
VANDALISING PRIVATE PROPERTY...



THE YOUTHS RESPONDED WITH NUMEROUS
OBSCENITIES. THEY TOOK OFF ON FOOT AND
PROCEEDED TO ATTACK A TRASH CAN. AS WE
KNOW, POORLY-STOWED TRASH IS A HAZARD,
ATTRACTING WILDLIFE WHICH MAY CARRY
DISEASE. POLICE WERE CALLED.



DAMAGE WAS ESTIMATED AT \$23 PLUS G.S.T.
IN RESPONSE TO MY CONCERN OVER CRIME
IN OUR MIDST, OFFICER BUSTER STEEVES
SUGGESTED A COMMUNITY-BASED SOLU-
TION. INTERESTED IN ATTENDING AN INFO
SESSION ON VIGILANTE JUSTICE? R.S.V.P.

“How the Liberal Party Works,” continued from page 5 »

It also seems that the young people surveyed by Cross’ colleagues are in some sense right. Participating in policy decisions in a governing party is difficult indeed, as one must convince the party, and then convince the PMO all over again, whereas interest groups can target the PMO directly.

The coincidence of power concentrated in the PMO and declining faith in political parties as a way to get things done raises the spectre of what Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul calls corporatism. Governments, Saul argues in frequent exhortations to political participation, are the “most powerful force possessed by the individual... [it is] the only organized mechanism that makes possible that level of shared disinterest known as the public good.”

When government is run by “interests” and not citizens, says Saul, the public good is swept aside in favour of who can direct the most pressure at politicians. And this is not facilitated by a choice, but rather by a general disenchantment with the system. In *The Unconscious Civilization*, Saul writes: “Virtually every politician portrayed in film or on television over the last decade has been venal, corrupt, opportunistic, cynical, if not worse. Whether these dramatized images are accurate or exaggerated matters little. The corporatist system wins either way: directly through corruption and indirectly through the damage done to the citizen’s respect for the representative system.”

Currently, 6 out of every 10 dollars of Liberal campaign

financing comes from corporations. Bill C-24, the recent, sweeping campaign finance reform legislation, will ban corporate and union donations to election campaigns and severely limit their donations to leadership campaigns. Such legislation, however, does little to address the fundamental imbalances in the power structure as it currently exists.

Unfortunately, this same structure provides few starting points for individual Canadian citizens who wish to put their “most powerful force” to work, or simply keep it from becoming someone else’s most powerful force. At present, a desire to participate in politics is synonymous with frustration for anyone who doesn’t have friends in the PMO or the same interests as well-funded lobbyists.

“Photons”, cont. from page 7

grumble “my kids could do that” can now take their children to galleries and show them what to aspire to. The elite and the general public may still be resentful of one another when it comes to art, but now they have to do it side by side. The catalyst to this blending, this change in art-viewing, has just been effective marketing. It’s all a little bit grotesque and a little bit amazing.

Max Liboiron has spent the last few months travelling in Europe. Along with Jane Henderson, she will be taking on the job of arts editor of The Dominion in September.

