

THE OBSCURE PARTY IS RISING IN THE EAST



RICHARD BERCUSON

Maybe it's the party's vehicle. I've asked Velvita to check the runners on the sled, but she insists they're fine. The woman is stubborn, though a great organizer. Yesterday, she arranged the three business cards in my wallet in alphabetical order by postal code.

Given campaign time constraints, I couldn't have done it. It's tough enough for a ventriloquist to find regular work, let alone run for Parliament. The eastern region has proven to be more complex

than I'd thought. People here are angry. I knock on doors, announce who I am and get no response. Velvita says I should wait for the doors to open first. I may try that next week. But honestly, I can't think of everything.

All the other party signs look nicer. And bigger. And more colourful. Reds and blues and oranges.

The perfect contrast for us, I figured, was white to represent purity and sincerity. Yet no matter where I tape them, they don't attract attention. I may have to darken the ivory lettering, too.

Mundane campaign jobs seem endless.

Yesterday I stood alone on St. Joseph Boulevard to show myself to constituents. I also had flyers to pass out. Orléans drivers sure are an irritable lot.

People were honking and screaming at me.

A guy in a blue Honda hollered as he yanked the steering wheel: "You idiot! You're in the middle of my lane!"

He just didn't understand, which is much of the challenge of the Obscure Party of Canada. I've sensed it since we started our campaign Tuesday night. I even wrote to The Unknown One about it, but the e-mail bounced back. He keeps changing his address. Says it's to avoid hounding from the press. Can't blame him.

Still, it's pretty frustrating for those of us in the trenches. When I get the walking cast next week, I guess I'll need to find a less busy street.

Meanwhile, I soldier on. It's tougher than for the other candidates. They only have

per. "At last. Support for the east." People looked around, puzzled as to who said it. On the up side, I may have found a practical use for my profession.

Once, a fellow shouted from the back of the hall: "What's your view on health care?"

I stated our party's position, that necessary funds would be clearer once the Petrie Island cruise ship port is completed.

"What about crime?" screeched a lady hugging a bag of Kettleman's bagels like they were puppies.

"We're against crime," I snapped before making trigger-clicking sounds come from her bag. Boy, did she jump.

Suddenly, all the panel members stood on their chairs, rhythmically waving their tuques as one candidate sang Paul Anka's *Havin' my baby*.

Before you knew it, there was a crowd jostling me. Someone tried to pick my

pocket, but gave me a wedgie instead. It was actually a bit frightening as I had to fend for myself. I'd given my security guard the night off because of a Midnight Madness sale at La Senza in Place D'Orléans.

Last night I decided to present the OPC's promises in the Loeb at Convent Glen Shopping Centre. There I was, between the hamburger buns and the chocolate chip cookies.

"Expansion of Highway 174 north and south! Money for light rail between Ste. Isidore and Vars! Jobs, jobs, jobs in Cumberland's new call centre at Measurement Canada's British Imperial Unit conversion office!"

Everyone — everyone! — stopped and stared at the Fig Newtons.

I'm getting better at this. The Unknown One will be proud. I hope he's released by the 23rd.

RICHARD BERCUSON'S column appears weekly.