

Red light for the Green Party

Elizabeth May doesn't stand a chance against Peter McKay in Central Nova



ELIZABETH
MCMILLAN

Last week Green Party leader Elizabeth May announced her intention to run in Central Nova, NS—Peter Mackay's riding—in the next federal election. Well good luck, I say, because constituents there will pick MacKay over an upstart environmentalist any day.

While May's confidence is commendable—she's running head-first into the Conservative Party's golden boy—her tactic is political suicide. Having grown up in PEI, I can tell you that politics in the Maritimes is a blood sport. You're born into either a Tory-blue or Grits-red legacy—it's as simple as that. And when party lines run that deep, you need a lot more than cheery optimism.

This is not to say that May is unqualified. A member of the Order of Canada, she holds a law degree, was awarded two honorary doctorates and is nationally recognized for her environmental work. She's also the author of several books, including 2006's *How to Save the World in Your Free Time*. No one said she wasn't ambitious.

May first ran in Nova Scotia in 1980 at age 25, back when she still worked as a waitress. She challenged then-deputy prime minister Alan J MacEachern in the nearby riding Cape Breton Highlands-Canso. May alluded

to this past attempt recently by taking a stab at her opponent, stating that, "To be brutally honest, Peter MacKay is no Allan MacEachern."

May made her announcement from the Tall and Small Café, an independently owned Fair Trade coffee shop home to local hippies and students in the heart of Antigonish—easily the most left-leaning part of Central Nova. May told the small crowd, "This where I am from and this is where my heart's at, and I wanted to run where I am comfortable." Not surprisingly, May found a receptive audience at a liberal refuge in what is an otherwise traditional conservative riding.

In Atlantic-Canadian discourse, she's still 'from away,' meaning she is, and will remain, an outsider.

But to many constituents, May isn't at home in this region, because she never lived in Central Nova. While she grew up on Cape Breton Island, she was actually born in the US. In Atlantic-Canadian discourse, she's still "from away," meaning she is, and will remain, an outsider. In contrast, MacKay comes from a wealthy farming family in the region—one that also happens to lead a local political dynasty. MacKay's father, Elmer, held the seat for Central Nova from 1971–1993, and many constituents still vote for "Elmer's boy."

What's more, the Green Party has virtually no presence or credibility

in Central Nova, or the rest of the Maritimes that matter. Last January, the Green Party registered just 2.6 per cent of the vote in Nova Scotia, compared to 5.5 per cent nationally. In Central Nova, Green candidate David Orton received 671 votes—a mere 1.6 per cent. This doesn't exactly make for an environmental hotbed.

Even if May already had a strong national presence, it's unlikely she could mobilize a victory based on her position as a figurehead for a party that has no seats in the House of Commons. Perhaps May's only hope is that she can capture the NDP vote and convince Liberals to support her platform to come in a healthy second place.

Unfortunately, May will lose simply because it will be too much for the majority of the population in Central Nova to vote for an untested female candidate running for a party that still holds connotations of pot-smoking hippies, idealistic environmentalists, troublesome protesters and outspoken students.

Central Nova still thinks it needs MacKay and that Atlantic Canada needs a high-profile Cabinet Minister to prevent Ottawa from forgetting them completely. This isn't entirely without merit. But what the people of Atlantic Canada also need is a government who will acknowledge the crippling effects of a high unemployment rate, faltering social programs and the potential devastation on an agriculture- and fish-based economy if the environment doesn't become a priority.

Don't try telling that to the backroom boys of local politics, though: they made up their minds the day they were born. Better luck next time May.

LETTERS • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Mimsy adaptation nothing but Jabberwocky

(Re: "Mimsy preaches a dull environmental mantra," 22 March). Perhaps it is my inner geek that is writing this letter, but I am surprised that not a single reviewer of the film *The Last Mimzy*, including that by Maria Kotovych, even mentions that this film is adapted from a very famous science fiction short story ("Mimsy Were the Borogoves") by Lewis Padgett. Then again, considering the horrible adaptation by [director] Robert Shaye, the film is not at all recognizable as having anything to do with the original story.

Sadly, reviewers like Kotovych have missed a golden opportunity to point readers in the direction of the original story (which can be found in almost any "Best of" Science Fiction anthology). "Mimsy Were the Borogoves" stands as one of the seminal classics of the genre and I for one am depressed and astonished that such a famous work should be so badly adapted to film (the only recognizable feature is the toys from the future) and perverted to make some sort of "environmental statement" while trotting out the spectre of terrorism so popular these days.

These themes are not only inane but gratuitous, representing modern cinema's inability to do anything other than pander to the lowest common denominator and attempt to seem socially conscious at the same time.

Padgett's work, on the other hand, has much to say on the nature of childhood, the inherent intelligence of children, the way that adults often dismiss the wisdom of children and their views of the world, as well as extremely clever references to Lewis Carroll. A more intelligent and careful adaptation of "Mimsy" could have

produced a great film that would have delighted both child and adult audiences.

As for Edmonton's film reviewers' inability to mention the source of this dull piece of fluff: shame. [Though] Padgett's story is credited at both the beginning and end credits, even a cursory Wikipedia search would have yielded enough material to satisfy science fiction fans and provide a context with which to properly critique the film.

DAVID NICKLIN
Arts XVII(!)

Curve system doesn't make the grade

I was a graduate student here at the University. I decided to come here after hearing about the school's reputation and programs. To be honest, I do not like how grades are given and recorded.

Like almost every student here at the University, I have worked extremely hard. Not just to be the best that I can be, but to get into other competitive programs. I performed quite well, earning high marks in all my courses. However, my joy was turned into great frustration when I saw that all my grades were curved to a rather mediocre, uncompetitive letter grade according to the University's grading scale.

I believe that the transcripts should (at the student's request) show the percentage mark as well. This would show how well the student accomplished certain objectives, not just how he ranks in comparison to other students. This way, the reader of the transcript can determine how "good" the student is, instead of assuming his competence based on a letter grade.

[This] is being done at McGill University: the student is given a numerical and letter grade, as well as the class

average from which anyone can interpret achievement in their own way.

Many professional schools consider a B+ to be mediocre if not the minimum allowable grade for admission. But how can someone who achieved a 90 per cent be considered mediocre? Why should he be penalized based on what others have achieved on a curve? The basic purpose of a University is to foster learning, not competition. I believe that the way grades and transcripts are created at this University encourages competition, rivalry, jealousy and secrecy—all of which are detrimental to learning and against the very core philosophy of a university. Many of the students and instructors that I have spoken to agree with this.

Please at least consider allowing percentage grades to be included in our transcripts at our request. This will at least give professional schools or graduate schools an idea of the amount of effort a student personally puts in, as opposed to where they stand in a lineup. It will not cost any more to print the transcripts, but will make a world of difference to us, the students at [the] U of A.

FAIZAL KASSAM
Graduate Studies

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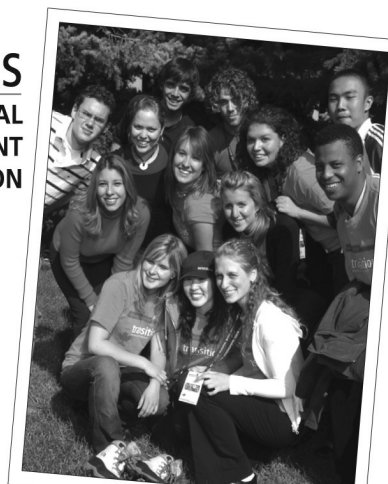
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