

# Federal Politics: Reform Party delegates vote down official youth wing

By Ryan Nakashima  
OTTAWA (CUP)

YOUTH MEMBERS AT THE REFORM PARTY convention Oct. 13-16 were put in the uncomfortable position of accepting that they would not have party youth wing.

Ezra Levant, a 22-year-old law student at University of Alberta, said he trusted the "good instinct" of delegates when they voted Oct. 14 against a resolution to create a youth wing. Special privileges should not be given to anyone, he said. "[Youth] really is a special-interest group," Levant said. Other major parties, like the Liberals and Conservatives, reserve 10-20 per cent of voting delegate spots at their conventions for youth members. But Levant said this system "artificially segments, segregates and ghettoizes young people."

Ian Whyte, president of Carleton University's Reform Party club, only had non-voting status at the convention, but said he was glad delegates voted down the proposal for "special status" for youth. "My personal feeling is that I can have a lot of influence as a regular member rather than being sectioned off in a youth wing," he said.

A 1990 internal poll showed 48 per cent of Reform members were over 60 years old and 38 per cent were retired, according to Sydney Sharpe and Braid in *Storming Babylon: Preston Manning and the Rise of the Reform Party*. "The people attracted to the Reform Party are pretty much the

same no matter where Manning finds them. As countless journalists have noted, his audiences are mainly white, male, middle class, and pushing the far side of middle age," they write.

Most of the audience at the Reform convention at the Congress Centre were white and elderly, and the audience seemed about 60 per cent male. Young delegates had a small amount of time to speak to the assembly in support of students funding the full costs of their education.

By a show of voting cards, many of the other delegates indicated they didn't know much about how education is funded. Delegates tabled a resolution to support federal grants to students through education vouchers, because they indicated they weren't well informed. At a question-and-answer session for youth Oct. 14, Reform Leader Preston Manning supported a voucher system of funding. The pro-

posal is to divide up the current \$2.6 billion in transfer payments made to the provinces by the federal government for education.

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It would be divided among students attending post-secondary institutions in the form of vouchers. Students would then be able to shop the voucher around to different schools. "It puts more purchasing power in the hands of students," Manning said.

Levant also rose to speak during a debate over Reform's resolution to "support the right of all job applicants to be evaluated solely on the basis of merit" and argued against special treatment for minorities. Levant helped found the group Minorities Against Discrimination at the University of Alberta, which is opposed to affirmative action admission into law schools.

Levant, who is Jewish, said he founded the 53-member group with black student Kentish Steele. Most of the members of the group are non-white, he said. "I feel stupid checking off the list [of our

members]: Sikh, Chinese, black."

He also gave a speech to delegates Oct. 14 about being a young Reformer. "I'm not just a young Reformer. I'm a Jewish Reformer. But I'm not in any racial caucus, and I'm not in any special committee because I, like thousands of other Canadians of different ethnic backgrounds have found—for the first time in a long time—a party that values people not because they meet some quota, and not by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character, a party that promises not to give anyone special treatment or special laws or policies or privileges or affirmative actions based on what we are, but rather to value us for who we are."

Meanwhile, outside the convention, a protest was going on against the Reform Party. One student from Queen's University, who identified himself only as Richard, said he was protesting not only the Reform's alleged racist agenda but its policy on student cutbacks. "If the Reform Party [were in government and] carried through policies—like cutting back funding to the universities, cutting back student assistance—what's going to happen is we're going to have an education system that's going to become even more elitist," he said. "I think that's going to be a disaster for society." — with files from Zachary Houle, *The Charlatan*

# Health: Possible link between bleach and breast cancer

By Heather McGuffin  
MONTREAL (CUP)

AN EMERGING BODY OF EVIDENCE suggests that chlorine compounds used for bleach-paper products may also be linked to breast cancer in women.

"Breast cancer is now being associated with chlorine," said Johanne Fillion, administrative coordinator for Greenpeace in Montreal. "It's a fact, but since we have reason to question it, we should be taking precautionary action."

The concern is over organochlorines, the chemical by-products of chlorine technology. More than 1,000 different organochlorines, including dioxins and furans, are discharged in the effluent of pulp mills. More than one million tons are dumped into North American waterways every

year. Many organochlorines are widespread in water, food, and the workplace, and have accumulated in the tissues and fluids of the general population. A number of studies, including a 1993 report from The New York University Women's Health Study, have shown that women with breast cancer tend to have higher levels of organochlorines in their fat and blood than healthy women. "Our observations provide important new evidence relating low-level environmental contamination with organochlorine residues to the risk of breast cancer in women. Given the widespread dissemination of organochlorines in the environment, these findings have immediate and far-reaching implications for public health intervention worldwide," the report concluded.

Greenpeace is calling for a phase-out of chlorine and organochlorines. The organization says that chlorine bleaching of paper, the second-

largest use of chlorine after PVC plastic, can be replaced with off-white paper or bleaching processes based on oxygen, ozone, hydrogen-peroxide, enzymes, or metallic compounds. "There are alternatives," Fillion said. "That is why we are so against the use of chlorine."

Fillion says she is concerned about feminine-hygiene products, particularly tampons, which are chlorine-bleached. "It's unnecessary for chlorine to be used on these products," Fillion said. "We have to let the companies know we don't want chlorine used on sanitary pads and tampons. There is no reason for it." In England there was a cam-

aign against bleached paper products in 1989, and as a result there are now unbleached menstrual products and diapers available. We have to do the same here. We have to let the manufacturers know we don't want chlorine."

For women who want to stay away from chlorine-bleached feminine-hygiene products, there are non-disposable sanitary pads and tampon alternatives available at many health food stores. While some women might cringe at the idea of re-using feminine-hygiene products, it's easy to do, according to Louise Dallaire, co-owner of Ecologique, a distributor of reusable menstruation products. "It isn't any more

work. It's just a change in mindset," Dallaire said. "Reusable products have many advantages. You save money over the long-term. You aren't throwing waste into the environment. And now that there's a possible link between chlorine and breast cancer, you are also protecting your health."

But just switching to reusable products isn't enough, says Fillion. Women also have to tell the manufacturers of chlorine-bleached menstrual products why they are switching. "We have a responsibility as women to try to change this," she said. "It is easy for the companies to stop using chlorine. They just need pressure."

