

## Alliance Quebec is no shell

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There he goes again. Don Macpherson, in yesterday's column, attacked Alliance Quebec by a slogan, but without a whit of substance. He wrote of "the empty shell that is Alliance Quebec."

Some shell. Since our May convention, we've attracted about 1,000 new members, to a grand total of 4,700. When I first announced my run for the presidency of AQ in March of last year there were 2,660 members.

We've got so much done in the past three months since we renewed our leadership that the bare list could not fit in this column. We're on the move. Some examples:

- Tonight(Aug. 19), at 7 pm at Salle le Rizz, 6630 Jarry St. East, we're holding a public meeting to deal with some of the unfinished business that began in 1968. The wounds of the St. Leonard riot, when a nationalist school board barred Italian-speaking children from studying in English, haven't fully healed. Bill 63, Bill 22 and Bill 101 followed. First, these children were tutored in English so they could pass the admission tests under Bill 22. Then, the "illegals" of Bill 22 and Bill 101 were taught clandestinely in English, about 1,800 of them. Two people who were stars of that struggle, principal Kevin Quinn and journalist Luigi Di Vito, will be speaking tonight.

Also participating will be Carmela Mignogna, a proud "illegal" whose children were denied access to English school last year because she had studied in English illegally. Alliance Quebec referred her to lawyer Brent Tyler who took it to court, and the Quebec government finally backed down: all those amnestied in 1986 can now send their children to English school. The meeting tonight will inform these people, and those "illegals" who did not get the amnesty because they were no longer in English school on April 15, 1986, about how they can obtain their right to a certificate of eligibility for English school.

- On Monday, lawyer John Pepper Jr. appeared in court in Joliette at the request of Alliance Quebec to ensure that a man charged with a criminal offense there would get his right to a full trial in English, as the Supreme Court spelled it out on May 20 in its Beaulac decision. The prosecutor's office has taken Me. Pepper's request under advisement and is to reply with its position on the matter by September 20, 1999, the date of the next court appearance.

- Yesterday we finished editing an 80-page study of the needs of the English-speaking communities in the territories of our chapters, including Greater Montreal, the

Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean, Abitibi, Mauricie, Upper and Lower Laurentians. This important work was carried out cooperatively, and it will now go to the federal Human Resources Development Department. It will be followed by action committees in each region to carry out projects of community development.

- This week, we are putting the final touches to the first issue of a new periodical, The New Alliance Quebec. It's a sign and symptom of our new vitality and exuberance.

- We've created a Community Action Committee of volunteers, co-chaired by lawyer John Pepper, to respond to complaints from people who believe their language rights have been denied. Among other actions, we tested Hydro-Quebec's response in English to people who called for information during last month's blackout. In many cases the Hydro personnel were rude, refused to speak English or hung up. Mr. Pepper sent a letter to Hydro's president, and we've received assurances that it won't happen again.

- Our Committee on Employment Equity is now studying a thick dossier on violation of English-language rights in the Quebec region of Canada Post. You'll be hearing more about this.

- We celebrated June 24 by holding a fund-raising dinner for Avonelle Titus and others who had fallen behind in French school and had not been informed of their right to be evaluated by a psychologist and transferred to English school. We had referred Avonelle's case to Maître Tyler and he won: she and her brother will be in English school next month. We intervened in other cases and won decisions to have students evaluated. But we're pressing Education Minister François Legault to identify all the children who've fallen two years behind to have them evaluated and transferred immediately. Forcing us to fight each case one by one is cruel to the children and will take forever.

- We supported the Lyon and the Wallrus challenge to the sign law: a decision will be rendered on Sept. 10 in Granby. It could make history. We backed Michael's Photo Studio's right to have a web site in English only: the internet does not come under Quebec jurisdiction. We support the right of French parents to send their children to English school.

A shell? Hang on to your hats. You ain't seen nothing yet.