

Culture and Politics



Figure 9.1 Students getting involved in their communities. *Top:* Cleaning up for Earth Day. *Right:* Circulating a petition. How can you exercise your political power?

You enjoy canoeing on a local river that is a paradise for wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers like yourself. A major industry has just announced that it is building a plant upriver. You and your friends believe the plant will spoil the environment you love. The industry promises many badly needed jobs, and few people seem to care whether steps are taken to protect the environment.

- As a teenage student, you feel powerless. What can you do to make your voice heard?
- How does our culture allow us to participate in the way our society is run — to exercise political power?

WHAT IS POLITICS?

Politics is the way in which we organize ourselves so that the members of our society can live together in peace and security. As you have seen in the previous chapters, our society is made up of many groups with different values and concerns. Let's take the example of the previous page. You, as a nature lover, might oppose building the plant. If you were an unemployed worker who stood a good chance of getting a job at the new plant, however, you might feel strongly that it should be built. If you were a representative of the industry, you would have your own reasons for locating at that spot. Politics is the system we have for working out a balance among the interests of different groups in our society. Our political system gives each of these groups a variety of ways to make their concerns felt, as you will see throughout this chapter.

GOVERNMENT IN OUR LIVES

Canada is governed as a **democracy**. Democracy means government by the people. In our culture, one of the strongest values that we share is the right of people to participate in the way they are governed. Because people, together with their history, geography, and economy, differ widely across Canada — and even within a smaller area such as the Atlantic region — governments must respond in many different ways. They do so by operating on a variety of levels. We have a **federal government** based in Ottawa to deal with concerns of the nation as a whole. We have **provincial** and **territorial governments** that address more regional concerns. We also have **municipal governments**, or local councils, that look after local matters under the direction and authority of the provincial government.

Table 9.1 Government responsibilities: Some examples. Federal and provincial governments share some responsibilities, especially in the areas of health care, resources, social services, and job training. Where municipal governments don't exist, the provincial government looks after local matters.

Federal Government



Defence
International trade
Banking
Natural resources
Any area not included in the *BNA Act*, which established Canada's federal system in 1867 (e.g., radio, television, air travel)

Provincial Government



Education
Hospitals
Health-care system
Natural resources
Municipal government

Municipal Government



Fire protection services
Garbage collection
Street cleaning and maintenance
Building permits
Collecting property taxes and licence fees (e.g., for stores or pets) to pay for services

The politicians who work at all of these levels of government represent the people who elected them to their positions. You may have seen **representative democracy** in action in your school. Many schools have a student council or some other form of student government. Often, each grade will have a representative on the council to ensure that the concerns of students at different levels are considered. Our system of government works on a similar principle. Canada is divided into areas called **ridings** or **constituencies**. The voters in each riding elect one person to represent them at each of the various levels of government. **Representatives** elected to the federal level of government are called Members of Parliament (MPs). In the Maritimes, representatives to the provincial legislatures are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs); in Newfoundland and Labrador, they are called Members of the House of Assembly (MHAs).

Representatives to municipal governments are usually called councillors. All of these representatives make decisions in government based on the wishes and needs of their **constituents** — the people who live in their riding.

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Aboriginal peoples of Atlantic Canada had political systems that developed over many centuries. The Mi'kmaq Nation, for example, consisted of seven districts each of which was governed by a district council and a chief. There were also annual Grand Councils, where each region was represented. These councils selected a Grand Chief to preside over the nation.

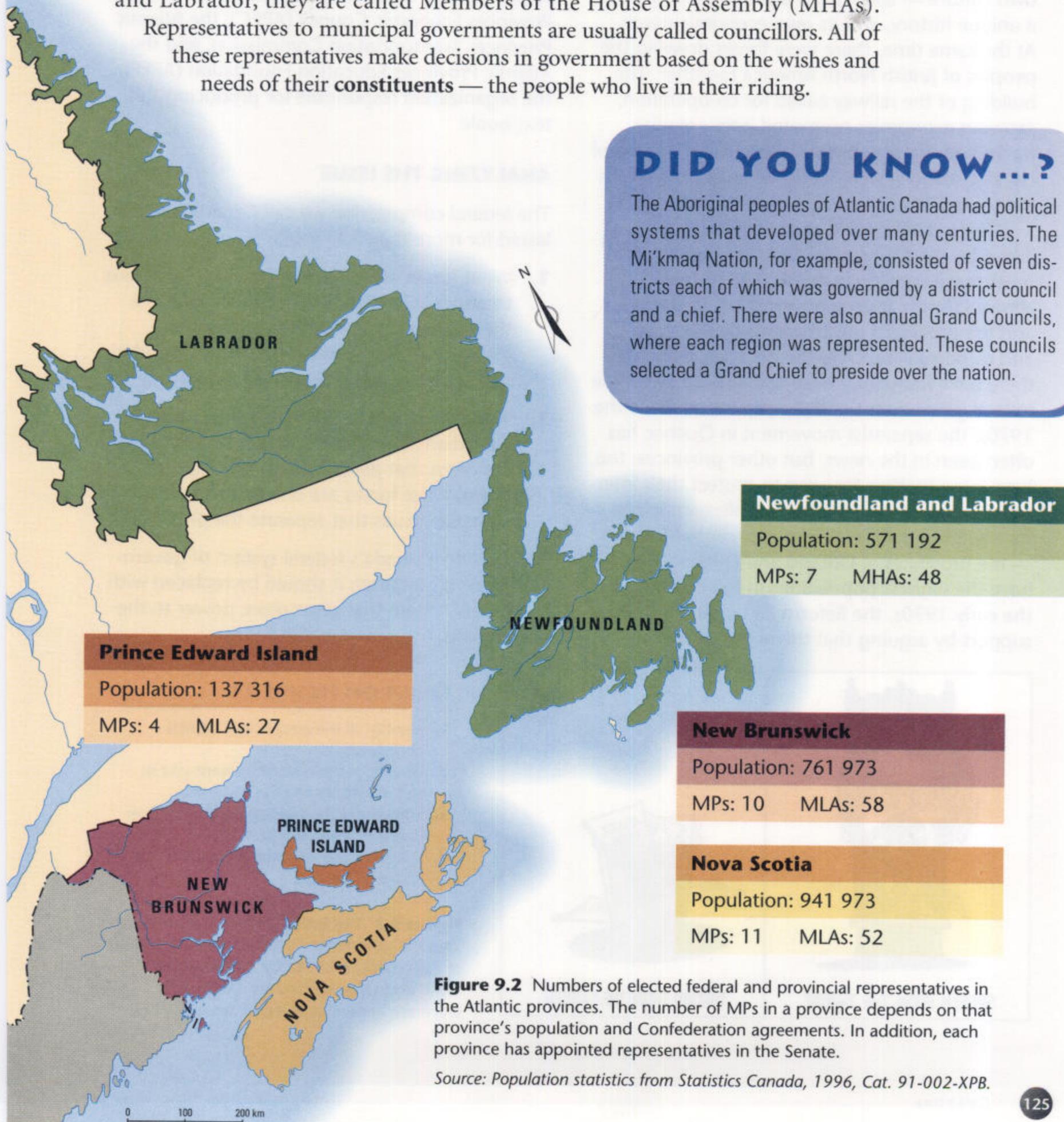


Figure 9.2 Numbers of elected federal and provincial representatives in the Atlantic provinces. The number of MPs in a province depends on that province's population and Confederation agreements. In addition, each province has appointed representatives in the Senate.

Source: Population statistics from Statistics Canada, 1996, Cat. 91-002-XPB.

FOCUS ON AN ISSUE

Does Our Federal System Work?

Our system of government was devised as a compromise. In the early nineteenth century, what we now call Canada was known as British North America. It was made up of several separate British colonies and territories, each with its own culture — each had a distinct government, a unique history, and its own economic needs. At the same time, there were forces drawing the peoples of British North America together. The building of the railway called for co-operation; growing economies promoted inter-colonial trade; and many colonists — particularly those of Loyalist stock — were fearful of an invasion from the United States.

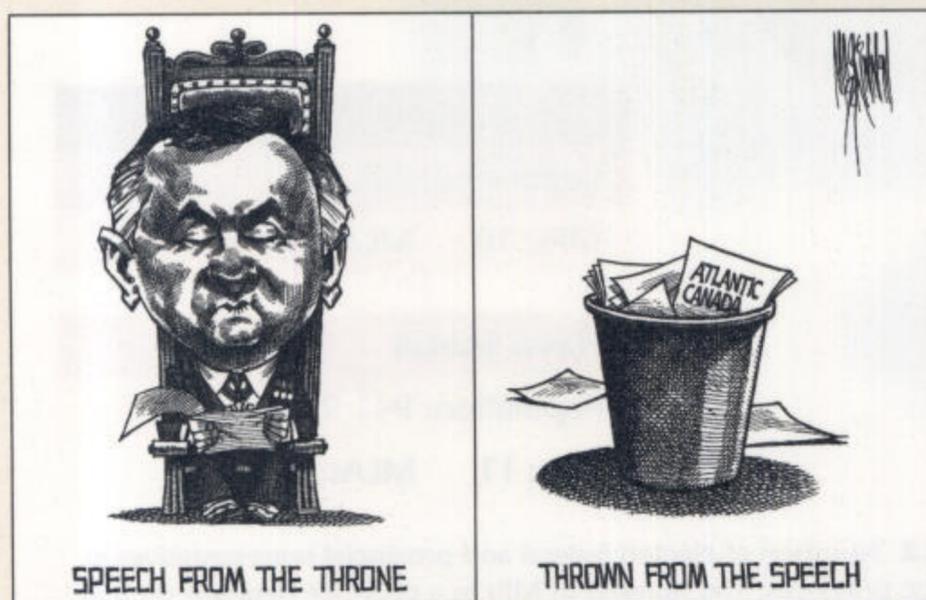
The federal system of government, established by the *BNA Act* in 1867, was supposed to meet these conflicting needs. The system allowed for the federal government in Ottawa and the provincial governments to share power and responsibility. Over the decades, however, there have frequently been tensions between the federal government and the provinces. Since the 1970s, the separatist movement in Quebec has often been in the news, but other provinces, too, have been looking for ways to protect their interests. The federal government is often criticized for adopting policies that favour central Canada — the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, which have the highest populations in the country. In the early 1990s, the Reform Party gained much support by arguing that the needs of the

Western provinces had been overlooked. In the East, the Atlantic provinces have been working for more co-operation among themselves, to benefit the culture and economy of the region. A number of organizations have been established to promote co-operation, including the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC), the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission, and the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF), the organization responsible for producing this text book!

ANALYZING THE ISSUE

The federal compromise we call Canada has lasted for more than 130 years.

1. What forces are currently drawing Canadians together? Consider interests and concerns that Canadians across the country share. What forces are drawing us apart? Consider issues that separate provinces or regions.
2. What forces are currently drawing Atlantic Canadians together? Consider interests and concerns that people across the region share. What forces are drawing us apart? Consider issues that separate the provinces.
3. Debate: Canada's federal system of government is outdated; it should be replaced with a new system that gives more power to the regions.



FOCUS ON FIGURE 9.3

1. Identify all the people and objects portrayed.
2. How does the cartoonist want you to feel in response to the cartoon?
3. Summarize the message of the cartoon in one or two sentences.
4. Do you agree with the message of the cartoon? Explain.

Figure 9.3 The Speech from the Throne outlines the government's plans for a new session of Parliament. It is read by the Governor-General in Ottawa or by the Lieutenant-Governor in provincial legislatures.

EXPLORATIONS

APPLYING YOUR SKILLS

- Use a telephone directory to list at least 15 services provided by federal government, provincial government, and municipalities. Try to choose services that you and your family might use in a typical month.
 - In a group, make a concept map to show how government affects your daily life. Include categories and specific examples to demonstrate your ideas.

CONNECTING AND EXTENDING

- Governments spend billions of dollars on delivering services. In recent years, they have tried to cut back on the expense.
 - Conduct interviews with family or community members to find out the following:
 - Government services when your grandparents were your age
 - Government services when your parents were your age
 - Compare these services with government services today.
 - What do you think government services might be like by the time your children are teenagers?
 - Make a chart or time line of your findings and conclusions.
- Investigate one municipal service in your community, such as fire fighting or garbage collection. Prepare a short report including the following information:
 - Who is responsible for the service?
 - Who pays for the service?
 - How is the service organized?
 - Are there other ways to organize the service that might be more efficient? Explain.

THE POWER OF THE VOTE

How does our system ensure that politicians do, in fact, represent their constituents fairly? It does so through **elections** — asking all citizens 18 years of age or older to vote for their representatives. In each election, voters choose from a list of **candidates**. In the riding where our hypothetical industrial plant is to be located, an environmentalist might choose to vote for the candidate who promised to work to establish a provincial park in the area of your local river. An unemployed worker might be more likely to vote for a candidate who pledged to promote new industry in the area. The candidate who gets the most votes wins a seat in government, where he or she is expected to represent the interests of his or her constituents. If the politician fails to do so, he or she stands the chance of not being re-elected at the next election. In Canada, federal and provincial elections must be called no later than five years after the previous election. In this way, politicians answer to the public for their actions, and must be sensitive to the concerns of their constituents.

Figure 9.4 The word “ballot” can refer to the paper on which you cast a vote or to the process of voting. In Ancient Athens the secret ballot was used by male citizens of the city voting on the banishment of individuals. Paper was a precious commodity in those days, so shards of broken pottery were used as ballots. This shard contains the name “Pericles.”

DID YOU KNOW...?

Canadians today vote by **secret ballot**, but this type of voting was not used in Canada until 1874. In the first Canadian election, in 1867, only men who owned property and who were 21 years of age or older could vote. Each voter had to declare his vote in public! Many were badgered to vote a certain way, even at the voting station.



The Party System

How do we know which candidates will best represent what we believe? Which ones will reflect the values that we hold as a result of our family life, religion, or education? Partly we know by watching and listening carefully to what they say. We can also get some idea of what they support by considering the party to which they belong.

A **political party** is a group formed by individuals who have similar views on public issues. The function of the party is to give a stronger, collective voice to people who hold those views. Over the years, there have been many political parties in Canada, each representing a different set of ideas. In the Atlantic region, the Liberals, the Progressive Conservatives, and the New Democrats have been the most influential parties. Legally, an individual does not need to be a member of a political party to be a politician. In practice, however, independent candidates are rarely elected because, without belonging to a political party, they will have little power.

After an election, the party with the most successful candidates forms the government. The other parties make up the **Opposition**. Members of the governing party decide which laws the government will propose, and the members of the Opposition act as critics of the Government. All members vote on new proposals, which are called **bills**. Once passed, bills are called **Acts** and become the law.

 **Liberal**

 **NDP**

 **PC**

Figure 9.5 Each political party has a logo. Shown here are the logos of the three main parties that have been most influential in the Atlantic provinces. What message do you think each logo is intended to give?

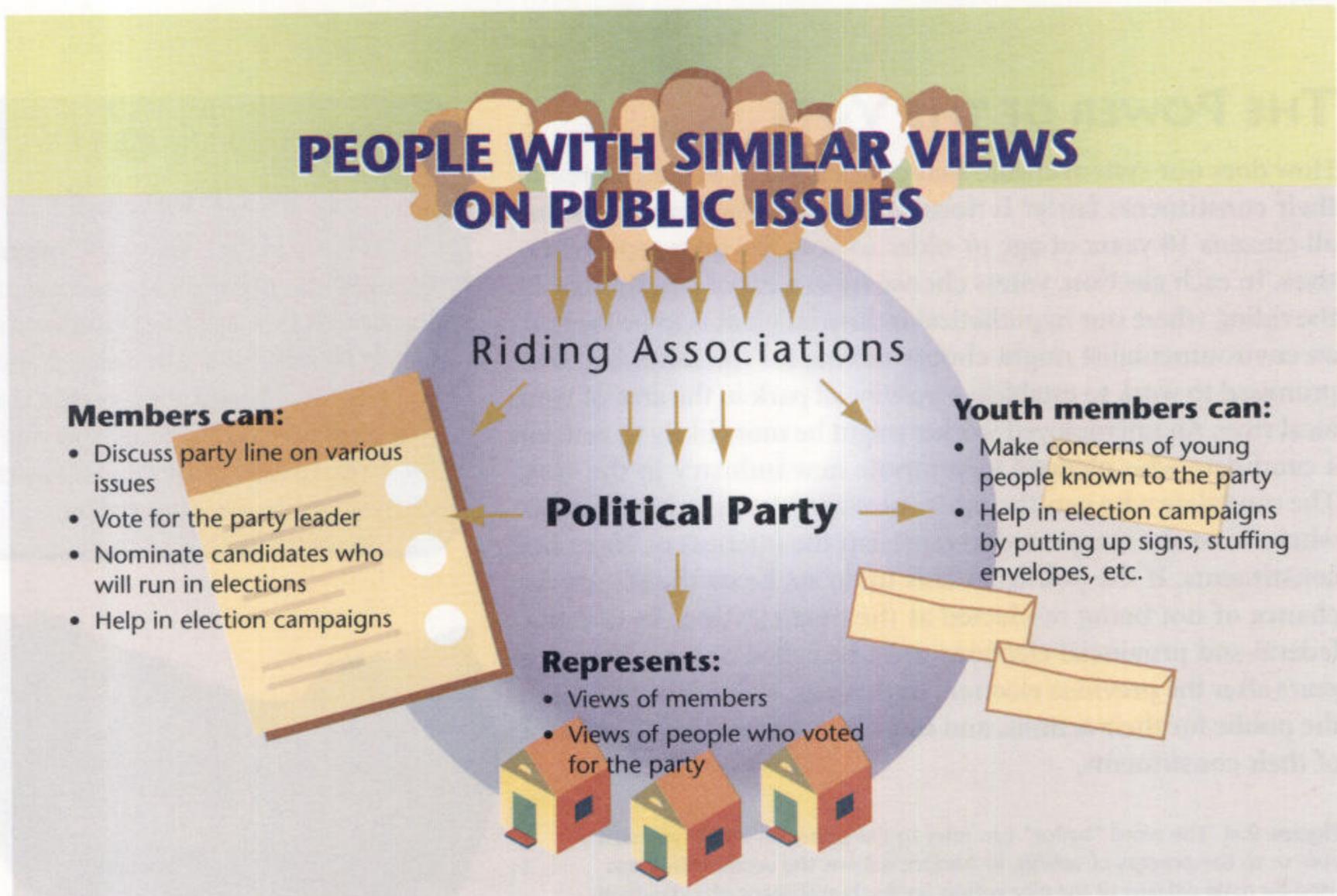


Figure 9.6 How political parties work. Anyone can join a political party by becoming a member of its riding association or youth wing.

The MPs of each party meet regularly as a group, known as a **caucus**. At these private meetings, MPs can explain the views of their constituents on various issues and argue for particular policies. Nevertheless, it is important for voters to choose a party that best represents their beliefs because, once elected, members of the same party tend to vote the same way. One MP, called the “whip,” is assigned the job of making sure all party members are present for votes and “follow the party line.” On many issues, MPs are expected to vote with the party, even if the majority of the people in their riding or their consciences tell them to vote otherwise.

Cabinet Government

When a government is elected, some of the elected representatives from the winning party are chosen by their leader to be in the **cabinet**. These are called **ministers**. The cabinet makes most of the major

decisions of government, oversees the civil service, and prepares new laws. Cabinet ministers are the most powerful people in political life. They are, however, responsible, or accountable, to all the elected politicians. The cabinet meets privately and then takes its decisions to the entire legislature. The cabinet must have the support of a majority of the elected members in order to govern.

The leader of the party that forms the federal government becomes the **prime minister**, and the leader of the party that forms the provincial government becomes the **premier**.

Figure 9.7 Interior of the House of Commons, Ottawa. The Speaker — an MP chosen to act as “referee” in the House — sits at the end of the chamber. Members of the government sit to the Speaker’s right. The opposition sits to the Speaker’s left. The prime minister and cabinet members sit in the front rows. The remaining MPs on the government side are known, therefore, as “backbenchers.”

DID YOU KNOW...?

Some linguists believe the word “caucus” is based on the Algonquian word *cau-cauasu*, which means “elder” or “councillor.”



WAYNE ADAMS: REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE

We have seen that the role of government is to represent the people. In the early 1990s, the government of Nova Scotia was concerned that the Mi'kmaq First Nation and African-Canadians were not adequately represented in the province's legislative assembly. The government asked the Provincial Electoral Boundaries Commission to examine ways of addressing this problem. No Mi'kmaq or African-Canadian had ever been elected to the province's legislative assembly.

The commission held hearings across the province. In particular, it sought advice on how to ensure representation of Nova Scotia's African-Canadian population, which lives in more than 30 small communities spread across the province. The commission rejected calls for a guaranteed African-Canadian seat in the legislature, one that would represent all African-Canadian voters from across the province. Instead, in 1992, it created a new riding called Preston, which would include three African-Canadian communities near Halifax (North Preston, East Preston, and Cherrybrook) and several non-African-Canadian communities. The Commission said this would "encourage but not guarantee" representation of African-Canadians in the legislature.

Early in 1993, a provincial election loomed, and there was great anticipation within the African-Canadian community. The Liberal party selected Wayne Adams, an African-Canadian municipal politician, as its candidate for the riding. The New Democratic Party endorsed Yvonne Atwell, head of the African Canadian Caucus. The Progressive Conservative party nominated Rev. Darryl Gray, a well-known Baptist minister. In February of 1993,

with three high-profile African-Canadian candidates running for the major parties, it seemed assured that the people of the Preston riding were about to elect Nova Scotia's first African-Canadian MLA.

Then came an unexpected twist. David Hendsbee, a former ministerial aid in the ruling PC government, had wanted to become the PC candidate for the Preston riding, but Premier Donald Cameron had refused to support his nomination. A few weeks later Hendsbee decided to run as an independent candidate.

No longer was the Preston election a race between three African-Canadian candidates. Hendsbee, who was not African-Canadian, was well known in the riding. He was a potential winner.

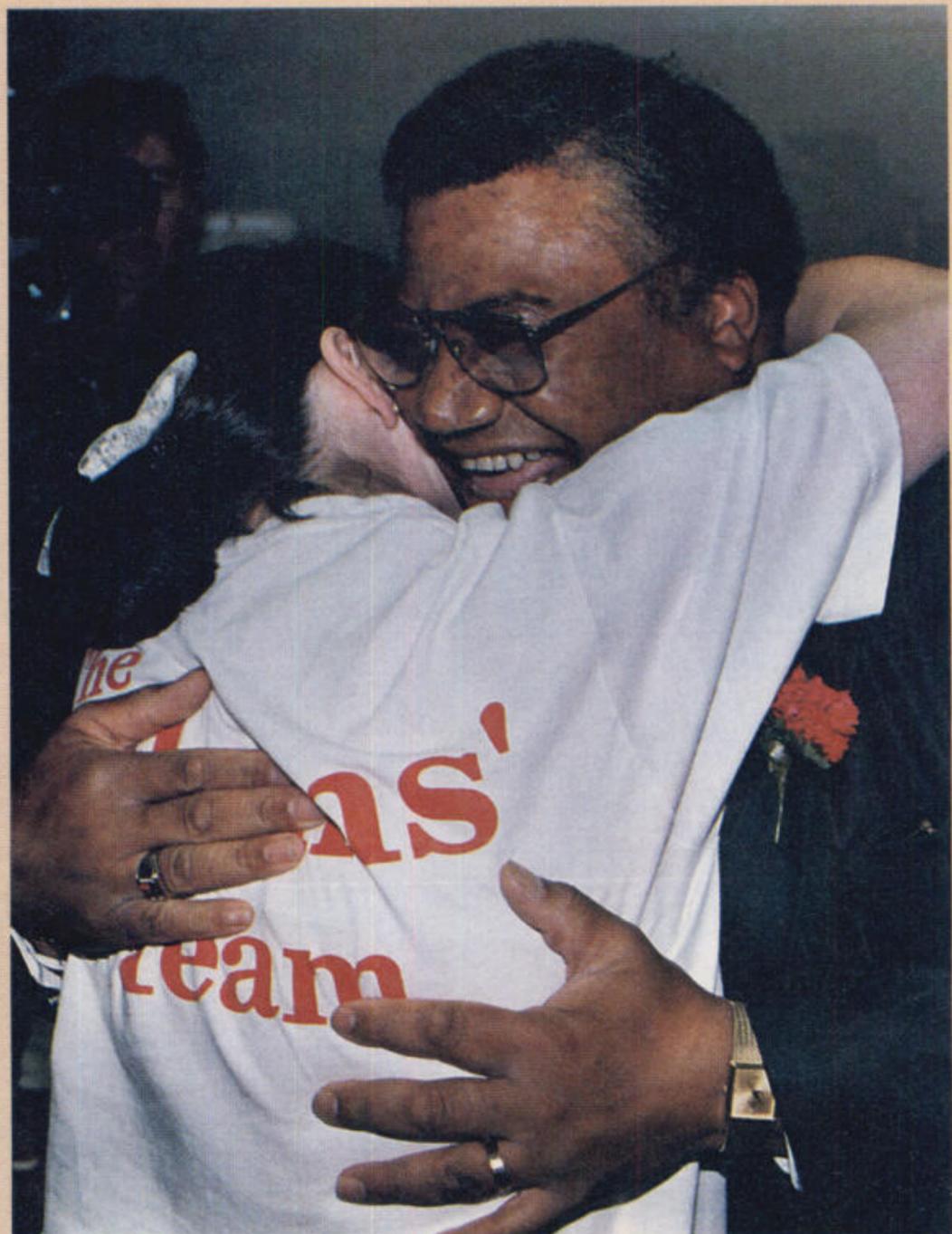


Figure 9.8 Wayne Adams receives a hug from a supporter after winning the election in Preston.

Would the African-Canadian vote split three ways, assuring Hendsbee of victory? Did any African-Canadian candidate have enough support across the entire riding to muster a win? Did Hendsbee have enough support in African-Canadian neighbourhoods to combine with his expected popularity in other neighbourhoods? On election night, all eyes were on Preston. The result: Liberal Wayne Adams won with a margin of 491 votes.

The newly elected premier, John Savage, began to build his cabinet. His Liberal party had won 40 out of 52 seats, and many of the new MLAs, including Wayne Adams, had the qualifications to be effective cabinet ministers. Adams had the administrative experience and the personal skills necessary for the job. Leaders in the African-Canadian community and other supporters lobbied on his behalf.

No one was surprised when the premier made Adams Minister of Supply and Services and Minister Responsible for Communications and Information. The new cabinet was sworn in at a public ceremony in Halifax. Hundreds of onlookers erupted in a standing ovation when Wayne Adams took the oath of office to become Nova Scotia's first African-Canadian cabinet minister.

Wayne Adams's road to success

Since Wayne Adams was elected, he has had little time to reflect on what it all means. But people in the Black community know one thing is certain: his election and high-profile political appointment is a positive sign and a boost to morale for people of colour in Nova Scotia.

Adams agrees: "Black people in Nova Scotia have been invisible for too long." He laments the lack of Black role models, especially when he was growing up in Halifax's north end....

"There were times when I dreamed about being one of them," he recalled. "Yet at the same time, something in the back of my head told me I could never be like them. Only White people held those jobs."

Adams said he hopes his political success sends a strong message to young Black men and women to get involved in politics, business and other professional careers. "I always tell people, if you believe it and you focus on it, you can achieve it."

Success is something he knows well. He never lost an election in 14 years on Halifax County Council. And his resume reads like a catalogue of job listings.

Since graduating from high school in 1963, he has worked as an auto mechanic, owned and operated a service station, and was an affirmative action officer and later media information director with the province. He also worked part time as a newspaper reporter,

produced and hosted a radio talk show that won a national award, and owned a small business in Halifax.

Adams is married and has one daughter. He has devoted his life to community activism, human rights, and economic development. At the time of his election he was executive director of the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia and was a former president of the Nova Scotia Home for Coloured Children.

Source: Adapted from The Chronicle-Herald & Mail-Star, September 24, 1993, p. B1.



Figure 9.9 In 1996, Wayne Adams (centre) became Nova Scotia's Minister of the Environment. What would be his main responsibilities in this role?

EXPLORATIONS

REVIEWING THE IDEAS

1. Make a flow diagram to show the process of electing and forming a government. Include the following:
 - constituents
 - political parties
 - candidates
 - election
 - government
 - prime minister/premier
 - opposition
 - caucus
 - cabinet

ANALYZING AND REFLECTING

2. **a)** What values and beliefs would you look for in an elected representative? Make a list. Follow the example below.

Values: honesty, family life, etc.
Beliefs: Government should take an active role in managing services; Government should play less part in the economy, etc.

b) Compare your list with those of other students. What values are most commonly shared? What types of beliefs tend to be different?
3. Work in a small group. Assume that the position of MLA or MHA could be advertised. Write a newspaper ad calling for suitable candidates. Outline required skills and experience.
4. **a)** Why do you think members of government are expected to follow the party line?
b) Discuss ways in which elected members might be able to balance the wishes and needs of their constituents with the party line. (e.g., a free vote).
c) In the past, some members of government who have chosen to vote against the party line but in accordance with their consciences or the wishes of their constituents have been expelled from the party, so that they have to sit as independent members. If you were a member and faced this choice, what would you do?

CONNECTING AND EXTENDING

5. **a)** As a class, discuss:
 - i)** What did Wayne Adams mean when he said that African-Canadian people “have been invisible for too long”?

- ii)** What other Canadian groups are “invisible”? Have any people of Aboriginal ancestry been elected to the provincial legislature in any Atlantic province? Are various racial and ethnic groups represented in your provincial legislature? Are they represented in the cabinet?

- iii)** Are women politically “invisible” in your province?

- iv)** Do you think it is important to see others who are like us in positions of authority? Why?

- b)** Prepare a profile of someone who serves as a political role model for you. Your profile can be in the form of a short essay, a display, a role play interview with the individual, or a special news report.

6. **a)** Who are your elected representatives? Give the names of your MP and your MLA or MHA. Are you represented locally on a municipal or town level? Explain.

- b)** Find out if your representatives in government are members of the governing party or the Opposition. Determine their particular responsibilities (e.g., Member of the Opposition, Health critic).

- c)** Examine one federal or provincial issue that made the news, and find out how your elected representative voted. Draw a political cartoon giving your view of the issue.

7. **a)** If young people can't vote until they are 18, why do parties have youth wings and why do elected representatives try to find out what young people think? Discuss as a class.

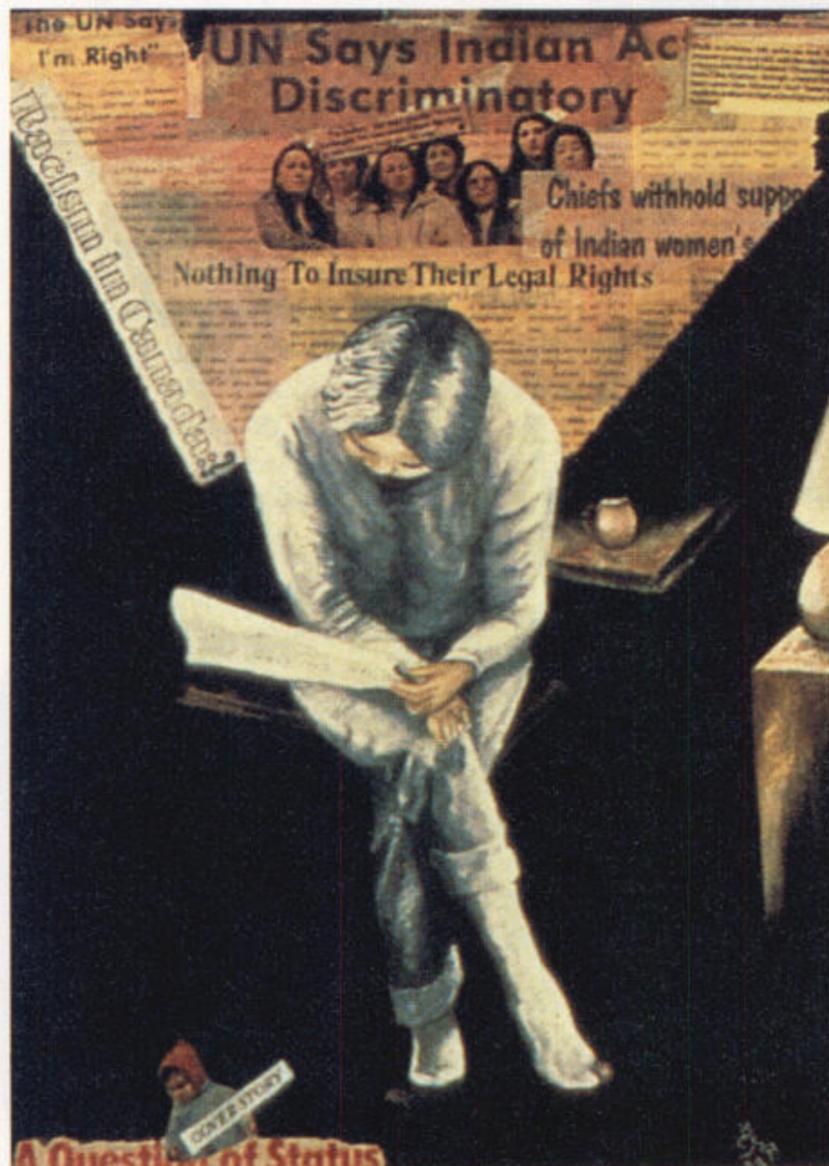
- b)** Imagine that a federal politician has proposed lowering the voting age to 16. Prepare a short speech or write a “letter to the editor” supporting or opposing the proposal.

8. Identify and research one current issue and indicate how at least three political parties view the issue. Suitable topics include jobs, social programs, cutting government costs, and increasing corporate taxes.

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

While voting is an effective way to participate in government, there are other methods of exercising our political power — of making government listen to our concerns. Generally, these methods are most effective when they are used collectively — that is, by people working in groups.

- ◆ **Political activists** use direct action such as protest marches, distributing pamphlets, rallies, and public speeches to draw attention to a cause. Environmentalists in your riding, for example, might hold a protest rally outside the offices of the industry that is planning to build the new plant, or they might hold a large, public picnic on the banks of the river to draw attention to the area they are trying to save.
- ◆ The **media** are a powerful means of communication. The environmentalists might place advertisements in newspapers and on local radio or television stations, but — more importantly — they would probably try to ensure media coverage of their cause. The media reach a very



wide audience, and can persuade large numbers of people to think one way or another. A report of a public picnic, together with striking images of a beautiful environment and an interview with parents of young children playing happily on the river bank, might persuade many people to support the creation of a park in an area zoned for industrial expansion. In contrast, a report of a hostile and disruptive protest outside business offices might persuade many people that the environmentalists who oppose the new plant are a group of troublemakers, not much interested in the greater good of society.

- ◆ **Lobbying** is another method of exercising political power. **Lobbyists** try to persuade politicians to support their cause, usually by supplying them with information. A lobbyist for the environmental group in your riding, for example, might give the Minister of the Environment a petition from nature lovers like yourself and documentation showing how the new industrial plant would destroy habitat for wildlife of the area. You have the freedom to lobby politicians on your own, but you are more likely to be effective if you form or join a **lobby group** of people who support the same cause. Today, there are an increasing number of professional lobbyists — people who are paid to represent the views of others to politicians.

DID YOU KNOW...?

The term “to lobby” comes from the British Parliament buildings, where the House of Commons and the House of Lords are separated by a central public lobby. It was in this lobby that people traditionally met with politicians to seek their favour.

Figure 9.10 *A Question of Status* by renowned Maliseet artist Shirley Bear, a political activist who supports Aboriginal and women’s rights. She believes that art and politics are connected with each other: “I use my art to express how I view and feel about the world.” In what way can art be a political tool?

- ◆ **Labour unions, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and other groups** use various methods, including lobbying, to represent the concerns of their members. The environmentalists in your riding might gain support from an NGO such as Pollution Probe.

- ◆ **The court or judicial system** gives people the power to challenge actions that threaten their rights. You saw in Chapter 6 how we all have the legal right to be protected against discrimination. In the case of the dispute in your riding, if the environmentalists could prove that there

was a good legal reason why the industrial plant should not be allowed, they could challenge the company and its plan to expand in court. If, for example, the law states that an environmental assessment must be done to predict the impact of any new industry, and the assessment has not been done, environmentalists would probably be able to get an injunction — a court order preventing the plant from being built until appropriate studies were complete. Similarly, if protesters were interfering with the operation of the company offices, the company could probably get an injunction to keep the protesters away.



Figure 9.11 Anti-poverty rally in Ottawa, organized by Canada's National Action Committee on the Status of Women. This NGO lobbies government on issues that affect women, such as pay equity, opportunities for promotion, and child care. What other actions do you think women could take to express their concerns on issues that affect them?

Table 9.2 Some Non-Governmental Organizations. NGOs often work to improve various aspects of the environment, health conditions, or the economy. Canada has a large number of NGOs that work to make a difference in other parts of the world. Do you recognize any of these names? Which organizations do you think are mainly political? Which are economic? Which are environmental?

Amnesty International	Canadian University Service Overseas
Canada World Youth	Canadian Wildlife Federation
Canadian Council for International Cooperation	CARE Canada
Canadian Organization for Development through Education	Oxfam-Canada
	Project Ploughshares
	Save the Children

DID YOU KNOW...?

In Sweden, anyone has the right to read the prime minister's mail, both incoming and outgoing. The letters are available in a government office. What do you think is the point of this law?

JANET CONNERS: PROFILE OF A POLITICAL ACTIVIST

Nova Scotians Janet and Randy Conners turned personal tragedy into a political movement. Randy, a hemophiliac, required regular blood transfusions. He contracted the AIDS virus from a transfusion of tainted blood. Not knowing that he was infected, he passed the virus to his wife.

The couple decided that the public needed to be made aware of what had happened to them, in order to prevent such tragedies in the future. They made many public appearances to draw attention to the need to reform the way we collect and store blood. They also tried to heighten awareness about the AIDS epidemic and to combat the prejudice and fear surrounding it.

As a result of the Conners' quest for justice, in 1993 the government of Nova Scotia became the first province in Canada to compensate victims of tainted blood. Their efforts also helped to persuade the government to set up the Krever Inquiry, to examine how thousands of Canadians were infected with the AIDS virus and hepatitis C through blood transfusions in the 1980s. Randy died of an AIDS-related illness in 1994, but Janet continued to be an eloquent spokesperson for those who suffer from AIDS, and a vigorous campaigner for government funding of research.

She won't go quietly

Janet Conners — mother and activist, widow and educator — battles AIDS in her own very public way. Outspoken and determined, she fights ignorance and prejudice about the disease each day.

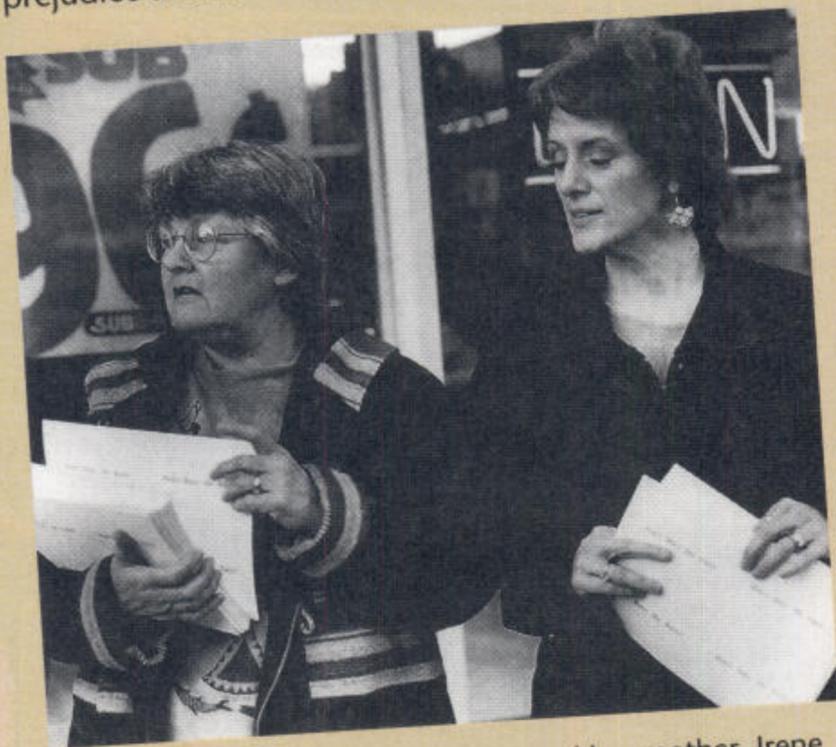


Figure 9.12 Janet Conners (right) and her mother, Irene Pritchard, hand out protest postcards in Halifax. They asked members of the public to send the postcards to their MPs protesting plans to limit the Krever Inquiry.

Conners has become adept at publicizing her message and pressuring government on AIDS-related issues. She sits on the board of the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, and is busy with fundraisers and safe-sex talks in schools. She participates in candlelight processions in memory of those who have died of the disease. She argued forcefully against the federal government when it tried to prevent the Krever Inquiry from laying blame for the distribution of tainted blood in Canada.

- Among her strategies:
- Asking Canadians to each send a nickel to contribute to Krever's defence;
 - Crashing a government meeting that was discussing limits on the Krever Inquiry — ringing alarm clocks; banging pots; and dumping letters, BandAids, and money on the floor;
 - Standing outside the House of Commons with duct tape and a Canadian flag across her mouth to demonstrate she's being gagged by the federal government, in an effort to get more funding that would allow her to prepare properly to fight the court challenge against the Krever Inquiry.

Source: Adapted from Halifax Chronicle-Herald and Canadian Press, various dates.

LABOUR UNIONS: THE POLITICS OF THE WORKPLACE

In 1997, approximately 30 percent of paid workers in Canada belonged to a labour union. A union can be formed when the majority of the workers in an industry or business vote to join. The government and the employer then recognize the union as the representative of all of its members. The union negotiates with the employer on behalf of its members on issues such as wages, job security, working conditions, vacation pay, pensions, medical or dental insurance, and other benefits. Because workers do not bargain with employers on their own, but collectively through the union, this process of negotiation is known as **collective bargaining** (see Figure 9.13).

Unions do more than bargain with employers on behalf of employees. They act as lobby groups at both the federal and provincial levels. Labour leaders often try to get governments to pass laws that will favour the members of their union. Often their lobbying is directed at economic issues such as job creation, minimum wage rates, or job-training programs. In addition, unions have been active on broader social issues. They have worked for the equality of women in the workplace, lobbied in support of social security benefits such as old-age pensions and medicare, and supported legislation prohibiting discrimination on grounds of race or ethnic origin.

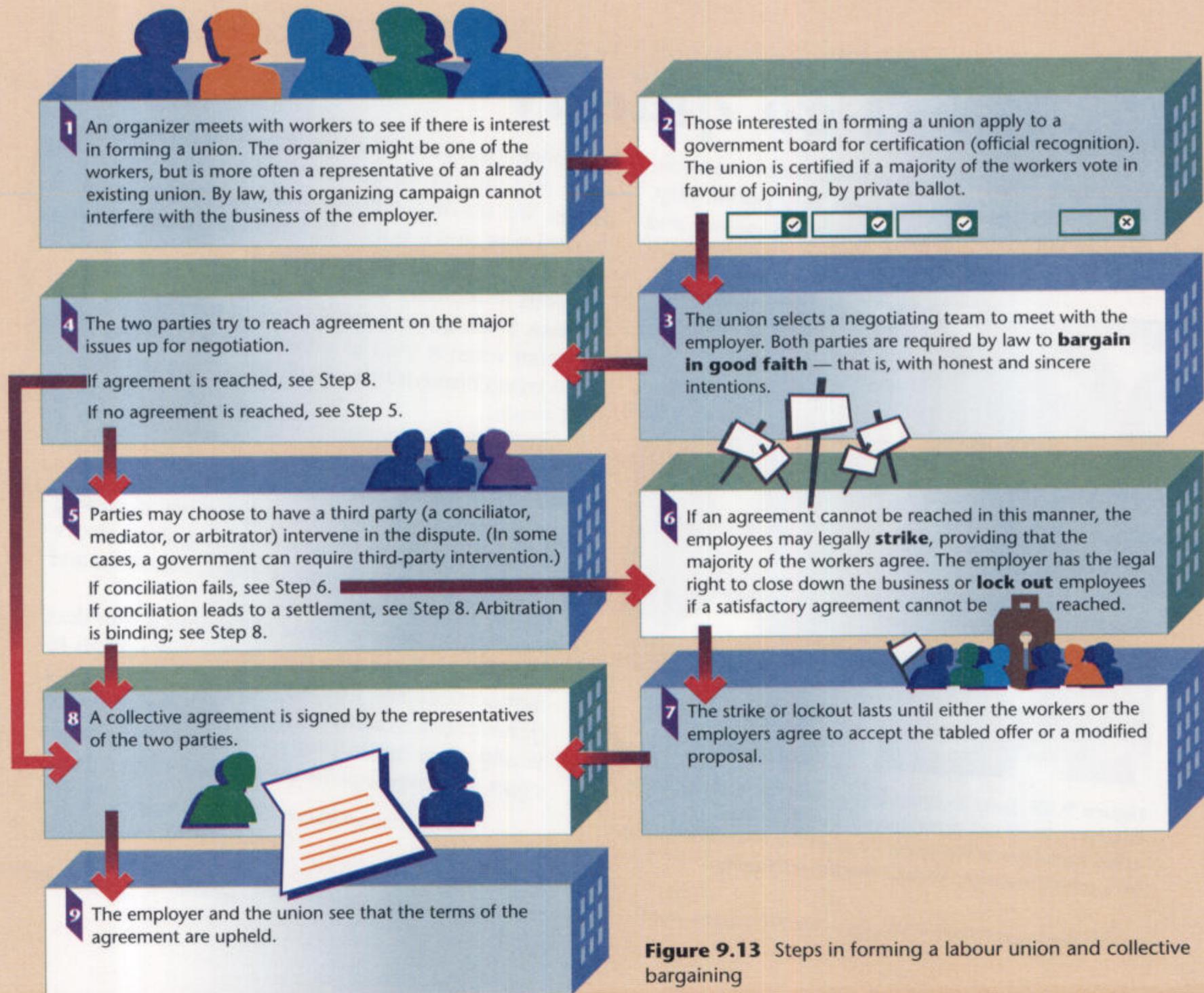


Figure 9.13 Steps in forming a labour union and collective bargaining

CAREER FOCUS: MEET A JOURNALIST

Ian Hanomansing grew up in Sackville, New Brunswick. He graduated from Mount Allison University in Sackville with a BA in Political Science and Sociology, and from Dalhousie University in Halifax with a law degree. Now based in British Columbia, he is national reporter for CBC Newsworld and host of Pacific Rim Report.

Figure 9.14 Ian Hanomansing



Q: How did you become a journalist?

A: Right after I finished high school, I got a summer job as a fill-in at night at a radio station in Amherst, and I really liked it. All through my university years, I worked in radio. I knew I wanted a job in broadcasting eventually, but I thought it would be a good idea to make myself more marketable as an employee by going to law school. In fact, a law degree can be useful for a reporter because you often deal with the courts or other legal issues.

After I graduated, I sent my resume to local stations. CBC called me for an interview for a job in television, and they liked my work. It was just one of those lucky breaks.

Q: Are television journalists trained in presentation?

A: Some people take training in presentation, but most don't. I learned from a combination of things. When I was 14 or 15 years old, I would take a newspaper and read the first page, pretending I was on radio, and listen to myself. I was also very involved in debating in high school. Debating helps you analyze an issue, think on your feet, argue a view, and be insightful. I also did play-by-plays with a friend for school hockey and basketball games. Then, when I was 17, and I first started working, I would tape myself on the radio and listen afterwards.

I still make tapes of my broadcasts and review them a few weeks later. It's not vanity; it's a case of seeing how I can improve. You have to be self-critical.

Q: What work goes into the preparation of a news story?

A: A lot depends on the type of story. There are "spot" stories, where something happens at 2 p.m., and you have to have it ready to air at 6 p.m. Your job is to find out as much as you can as fast as you can, go into the edit room to put something together quickly, and get it on the air. In that case, there is virtually no preparation. It's just a matter of getting it on the air and getting it right.

On the other hand, there are stories you find on your own. You might see something that interests you. You do the research, interview people, and write a script. In television, a story is usually no more than two and a half minutes. This means the script is very short, but there is always so much information you have to cover, and you have to make sure to cover all sides of the story. It's a challenge.

Q: The news media are often seen as one of the key institutions in a democracy. Do you agree?

A: Yes, I think it's true. All you have to do is talk to people in other countries where the media aren't

free to report what they like. They often don't get the whole story. News is fundamental information. We often tend to take it for granted, but it keeps us all aware of what is going on.

Q: What advice would you give a teenager interested in becoming a journalist?

A: First, find out as much as you can about the job. Talk to people to understand what it means to have to work with deadlines and tremendous pressure.

Second, be prepared to teach yourself. Even though you can go to journalism school, things change so rapidly — technology, for example — that you have to teach yourself a lot. You can start right away: watch television reports; see what the major networks are doing; think about aspects of a broadcast you like and don't like.

Third, seize any opportunity to practise. Get involved in debating activities, volunteer at a local station if you can, provide commentary for sports events.

Finally, remember that it's a competitive field out there. Luck can be the most important factor. That shouldn't be discouraging, but sobering. There are still a lot of things you can do to help yourself. With practice and hard work, you will be in a position to seize a lucky opportunity when it arises.

EXPLORATIONS

REVIEWING THE IDEAS

1. From the text or from your own general knowledge, give examples of the following:
 - a) political activism
 - b) lobbying
 - c) a labour union
 - d) an NGO

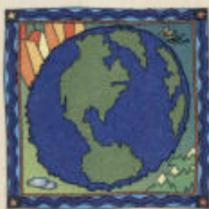
ANALYZING AND REFLECTING

2.
 - a) What are the advantages of a union to its members?
 - b) What are the advantages of a union for an employer? Why might an employer oppose workers' plans to form a union?
3. What is your response to the actions used by Janet Connors? Give your reaction in a short speech or "letter to the editor."
4. "It is both the right and the responsibility of individuals to participate in the political process." In a group discussion or short paragraph, give your response to this statement. Support your view with examples drawn from the chapter or from your own experience.

5. Review news stories in the newspaper and on radio and television for one day. Choose one story that is in the news, and compare its treatment in different media. How do the various treatments influence your view of the story? Explain.

CONNECTING AND EXTENDING

6.
 - a) Identify an issue of concern to the students in your school. Which level of government would be responsible for this issue?
 - b) How could you lobby your elected representative at the right level of government to make your concerns felt? Draw up an appropriate strategy.
7.
 - a) Research one recent political issue. Suitable examples include the seal hunt, logging, pay equity, and child poverty. What evidence can you find of involvement by labour unions, NGOs, media influence, lobbying, or any other form of political action?
 - b) Prepare a report or display of your findings.



SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

1. Work individually or in a group.
 - a) Identify some political issues in your community. Review newspapers and magazines to find more information about groups or individuals involved in these issues.
 - b) Identify the groups or individuals involved and make notes to record the ways in which they put their message across.
 - c) Which methods appear to be the most common? Which methods appear to be the most effective?

- d) Make a collage or other display of your findings.
2.
 - a) Do a review of newspapers and magazines to find out how people in other parts of the world get involved in the political process.
 - b) Compare your findings with the information you gathered for question 1. Draw three generalizations based on your comparison. Present them to the class.