

DISTRICT 25

ECOLOGY MONTREAL — GREEN POLITICS AND THE CITY

In 1990, "Ecology Montreal," Canada's first municipal Green party, hits the campaign trail. *District 25* chronicles the grassroots campaign of anarchist book publisher Dimitri Roussopoulos in the Jeanne-Mance district. From opening press conference to poll returns on election night, District 25, a mostly working-class district with a lively mix of cultures, provides a fertile backdrop for the Green ideal: "think globally, act locally." Along the way Roussopoulos speaks with "Action Vert," a group of women who meet at a daycare centre to discuss activism. Meanwhile, tireless supporters deploy strategies and work the neighbourhoods. We meet the other candidates, including incumbent city councillor Michel Prescott. On the day before the election, Roussopoulos and Prescott end up campaigning on the same street corner.

A Demos Media/National Film Board of Canada
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Directed and Produced by Robert Craig

30 minutes 05 seconds
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Closed captioned. A decoder is required.



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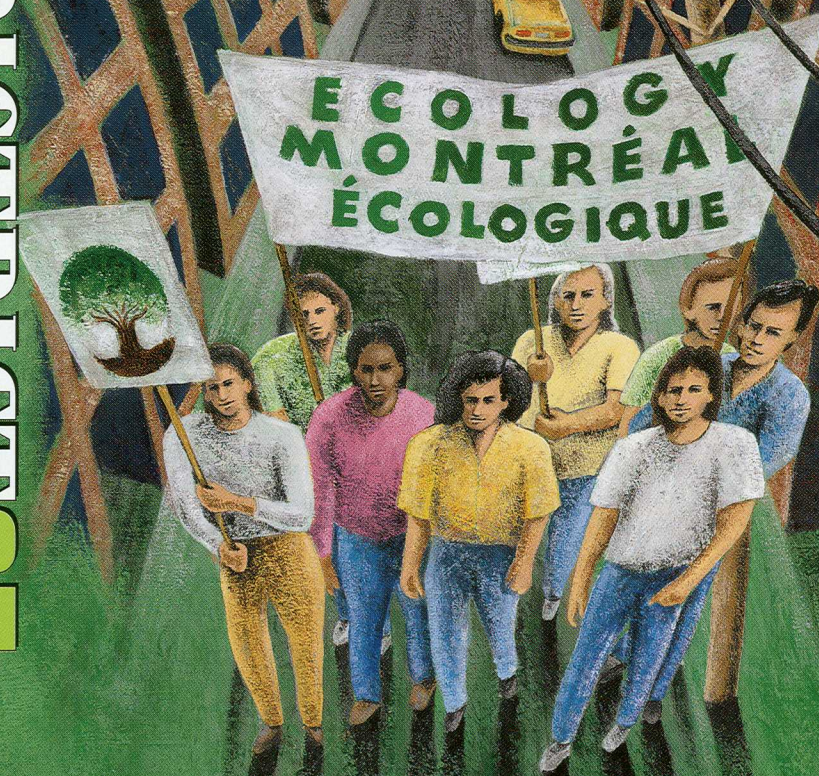


From the National Film Board of Canada

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VHS
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In 1990, "Ecology Montreal," Canada's first municipal Green party, fielded 10 women and 11 men as candidates in the city-wide election. *District 25* tells the story of the campaign for the Jeanne-Mance district.

Despite having never voted in federal or provincial elections, well-known anarchist Dimitri Roussopoulos declares his candidacy for the new ecological party. Ecology, participatory democracy, non-violence and social justice form the thematic framework for his press conference. The Green slogan: "think globally, act locally," seems especially appropriate for what he calls a neglected district on the verge of despair.

District 25 is a mostly working-class district, a lively mix of language, culture and new ideas. Still, the selling job isn't always easy. Some don't want to hear anything about "Ecology Montreal." Others are sympathetic, yet apathetic. Behind the scenes, strategists try to find the best way to get their message across.

Most of the campaigning is grassroots. We see the candidate meet "Action Vert," a group of women who meet at a daycare centre to discuss environmental activism. They are concerned about the current city administration's plans to build another incinerator. Roussopoulos advocates that City Hall encourage industries to recycle rather than burn waste products. He reminds the women that City Hall has the power to implement a comprehensive ecological program that would make Montreal a truly Green city.

Other candidates vie for votes as well. The incumbent, Montreal Citizen's Movement (MCM) candidate Michel Prescott, laments the lack of opposition at City Hall. Right wing candidates Maria Oliveira and Victor Rodriguez also campaign vigorously. The Greens distinguish themselves through their principles and platform arguing for referenda on important issues, proportional representation, neighbourhood governments and a recall mechanism to keep politicians in line.

The media, as always, plays a key role. Close to election day, a story appears in the *Gazette* newspaper claiming overwhelming support for the MCM in an area which includes District 25. The media portrait is not what the Greens are hearing on the streets. Concerned that the article will become a self-fulfilling prophesy, Roussopoulos calls various journalists at the newspaper. Is the reporting accurate?

November 4, 1990, election day. It looks like it's going to be a tight race. That night, the Greens gather at a local café to hear the results.



Narrated and Directed by
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Colour

30 min. 05 sec.

Order number:
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Audiences: Secondary and Post-Secondary Education (Environmental Studies, Social Studies, Political Science, Journalism); Environmental and Citizens Groups.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can social and environmental conditions be improved by way of electoral politics? Is municipal government an effective means for dealing with environmental issues?
2. Many potential Green supporters and voters display varying degrees of apathy. What is the source of this lethargy? What are some means Green strategists employ to overcome this?
3. The Greens advocate referenda, proportional representation, neighbourhood governments and a recall mechanism. In what ways could these platforms contribute to the creation of a Green city?
4. The media plays a key role in forming public opinion. Did the media influence the final result in District 25? How can the discrepancy between the *Gazette* article and the final results in District 25 be accounted for?
5. Incumbent city councillor Michel Prescott says that it is important to have a structured, coherent opposition at City Hall. Would the Greens be more effective in opposition or in power?
6. What steps should Montreal's Green party take to ensure their growth and continuation of their goals?

RECOMMENDED READING

Bookchin, Murray. *Remaking Society*. Black Rose Books, 1989

Kemp, Penny and Derek Wall. *A Green Manifesto for the 90s*. Penguin, 1990

Roussopoulos, Dimitri. *Green Politics*. Black Rose Books, 1993