

Writer explores failure of old-style politics in Accord

By **KAREN SMITH**
The Champion

Milton native Susan Delacourt took a three-month leave of absence from her job to get some stuff out of her system.

The 34-year-old parliamentary correspondent for the Ottawa bureau of the *Globe and Mail* is the author of *United We Fall*, which recently hit the market.

Her opinionated book is based on the fall of the Charlottetown Accord and its effects on Canadian politics.

Ms Delacourt argues that all major political parties have come to recognize that the 1992 constitutional debate provoked a fierce drive for a new era in governing and that, in the words of Prime Minister Kim Campbell, we must "change politics by the way we do politics."

"The future of the Canadian political system depends on the will of both people and politicians to restore faith and respect in each other," says the author, who was raised in town and attended Milton District High School.

Contrary to many, she argues that politicians are not "a bunch of bums."

To see how politics have been transformed over the last five years, she says, one need look no further than the creation of three parties — Reform, the Bloc Quebecois and the National Party.

There's likely no one more qualified to dissect the referendum and its aftermath. As parliamentary correspondent for the *Globe*, Ms Delacourt covered every aspect of the Charlottetown Accord from public forums to the backroom political manoeuvring.

In attempting to make sense of the trauma of the constitutional debate, she says she encouraged politicians to meet with her and discuss the disappointment and confusion they felt about the doomed national-unity enterprise.

As the fall election approaches, politicians are aware that the 1992 constitutional debate has produced a simmering well of resentment among Canadians about the state of politics, says Ms Delacourt.

She says the public is outraged that the referendum mispent Canada's dwindling public purse (by as much as \$300 million, according to some estimates), and that politicians and national opinion leaders put so much time and effort into an issue of little relevance to the lives of ordinary Canadians.

To the public, she adds, the constitutional debate wasn't a shared experience between the voters and the politicians. It was yet another example of politicians saying: "Here's our idea — take it or leave it."



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Through her detailed examination of the referendum process and its aftermath, Ms Delacourt suggests that the "No" vote was the voters' idea of revolution — a wholesale repudiation of elected officials and their brand of politics.

Canadians no longer saw their elected leaders as representing them,

she believes. Ms Delacourt argues that in voting "No," they effectively withdrew their support for democracy itself.

The book defends the idea that the constitutional wrangling signalled the death of traditional politics in Canada.

Ms Delacourt says a "new politics" has yet to be found — one that embraces respect, is not afraid of dissent, abjures horse-trading around the first ministers' table, and welcomes public involvement from all sectors of society.

United We Fall is now available in bookstores. The author plans to promote it in town sometime soon, she says.



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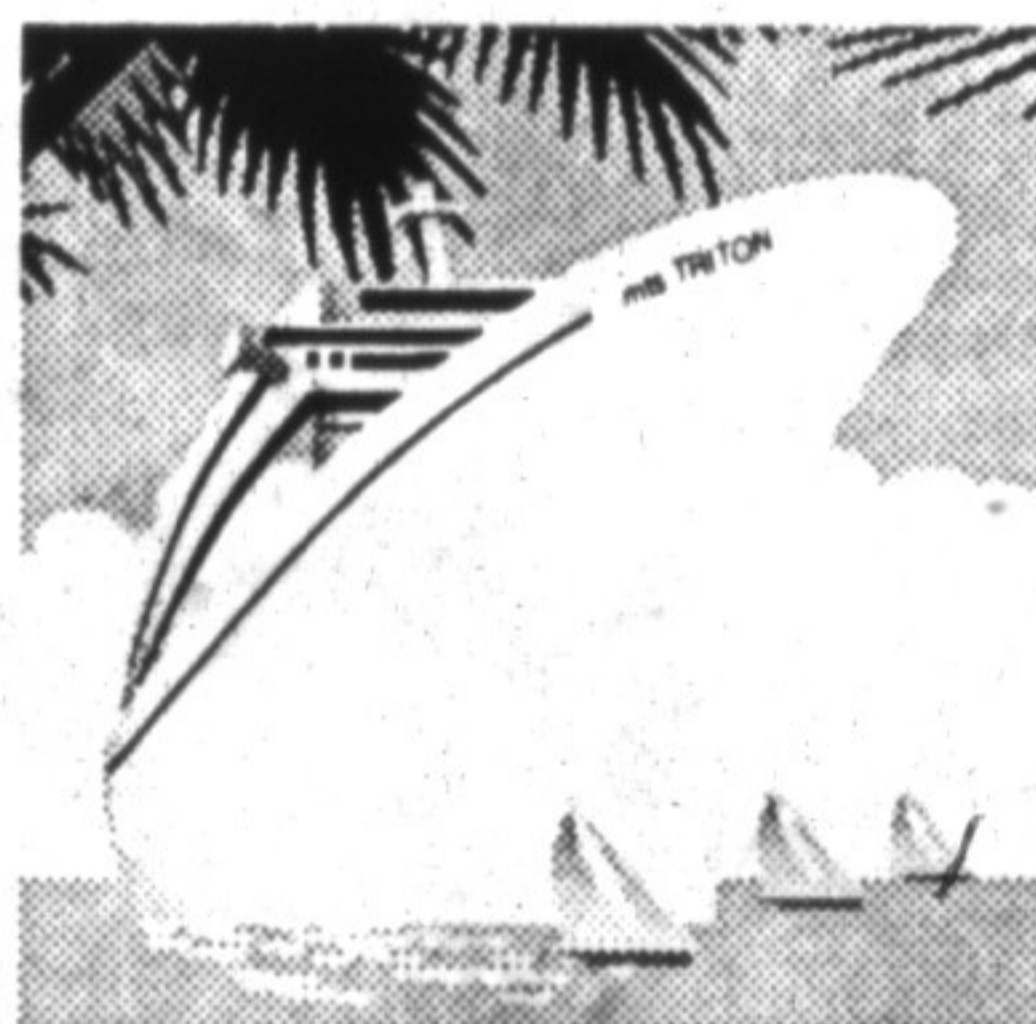
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