

Time to bring back the Victoria formula

Constitutional politics are like fashion: hang on to your old clothes, they will be back in style sooner or later.

It's the same with the right to veto that the Beaudoin-Edwards commission has brought back to life from the 1971 constitutional saga.

Given a mandate to come up with a new amending formula that would be both fair and acceptable to most Canadians, the commission went back to the formula proposed by former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the Victoria Conference in 1971.

It is a wise decision. The regional veto formula is the most reasonable as it gives the two largest provinces a specific right to veto and takes into account the demographic make-up of the country. The four western provinces have about the same population as Quebec — unlike the Atlantic provinces. But perfection is hard to find.

The formula also has the advantage of giving Quebec special protection. It's unfortunate Mr. Bourassa did not accept it in 1971 like he should have.

Things changed under René Lévesque. Quebec gave up its demand for a veto in order to join with the other provinces in a fight against Trudeau's patriation of the Constitution. Quebec accepted the principle of the equality of the provinces, which left it with the same clout as Prince Edward Island.

This principle was taken up by Mulroney with the well-known result: the unanimity rule that killed the Meech Lake accord. And it's still in effect today.

In order for the regional formula to work, Mr. Filmon and Mr. Wells will have to let go of an enormous amount of power which has enabled them to take hostage governments representing 97 per cent of the population.

REAL HEBERT

Too many ministries

From a letter by Eric Reilly of Penticton, B.C., published in the July 6 Penticton Herald.

Our present government has 39 ministries under the prime minister and his staff.

Compare this to the size of these ministries in the past. In 1948, when Louis St. Laurent was prime minister, he only had 17 cabinet ministers. In 1972 Pierre Trudeau had a cabinet of 24 ministers. He increased this to 29 in 1977.

Have these extra ministries allowed us to be more efficient? Do we not elect a government to manage the affairs of state efficiently?

Previous to St. Laurent, we had survived a terrible depression, fought the Second World War ... and did so with no national debt. We had even given a gift to Britain of \$4 billion to assist in its war costs.

At the time Trudeau became prime minister in 1968, our national debt was \$12.5 billion. It is now \$400 billion. This is not managing, but drifting.

The increased number of ministries was created to look after departments we never needed before and we possibly do not need now. Two such departments are the department of bilingualism, under the Secretary of State, and the Ministry of Multiculturalism

Why can't governments co-operate on taxes?

Excerpts from a spring speech by former auditor general Kenneth Dye that was published in the June issue of Fraser Forum, a publication of Vancouver's Fraser Institute:

Does it make sense to have duplicate sets of bureaucrats delivering the same services, paid for twice by the same family pocketbook? For example, in most provinces, Canadians have the opportunity of paying for two sets of government officials collecting taxes on roughly the same transactions.

The GST ultimately collected at the consumer level, is very similar to the provincial sales taxes collected at the retail level, except in Alberta. So we endure two sets of officials making up the rules, two sets of officials collecting, assessing and auditing separate systems. But only one pocketbook, paying for both.

Why couldn't federal and provincial governments, financed by the same taxpayers, co-operate, instead of compete? ...

How would you like to be a citizen in Saskatchewan paying for Saskatchewan officials to build a compelling case defending provincial interests in the Rafferty-Alemeda dam project? The same Saskatchewan taxpayer has the privilege of paying for the Ottawa officials who are building, on behalf of the same taxpayer, an equally competent, but opposite case, to defeat the provincial viewpoints. Again, one taxpayer paying twice...

We need to take a hard look at duplicated government services and where there is no benefit from the duplication, decide who should do the job.

It really doesn't matter whether the service is provided at the local, provincial, or federal level. After all, the money is coming out of the same pocketbook or purse.

What we need is the service provided once, not twice, economically and efficiently.

— From "What Canada Thinks", a regular feature of The Canadian Press.

Letters

Headline writers should read the Record

Dear Charles,

Who is writing your headlines? Mark Twain? Monday's front page featured this dramatic announcement: "Baltic violence spreads to Croatia". Such news would deserve this kind of publicity if Croatia were indeed a Baltic country, or even close to the Baltic Sea. But Croatia is at the other end of Europe, in the Balkan Peninsula, where, as any reporter who is up on current events can tell you, it has been for at least two months.

This morning we were greeted by this tasteless offering: "Too soon for inquest into death of innocent black man: Ryan". It would seem that the minister should be commended for his discretion. Antemortem autopsies are of

questionable value under the best of circumstances. The vivisection of the unfortunate M. François would almost certainly arouse the anger of Montreal's black community and of his insurance company.

These gaffes might be forgivable if the wire stories they relate to contained the same errors. But the first says, "... comprehensive talks on the Balkan country's future are to begin Aug. 1." The other story reports, "François ... remains in critical but stable condition in hospital." The rest of us pay good money for the privilege of reading the Record; your headline writers should read it too.

VINCENT CUDDIHY
Lennoxville

Beaver outdated

Dear Editor:

The unity crisis has spurred an idea whose time has come. Has it ever occurred to anyone that part of the Canadian crisis may well be our outdated national symbol, the much belabored beaver, which has long outlived its calling? It is time for a new national symbol which will launch Canada into the 21st Century. We propose the magnificent golden eagle.

Visualize this regal bird in flight which can be seen from coast to coast in Canada. Unlike the beaver which symbolized the pre-Canada activities during the 17th century when we Canadians were hewers of wood and drawers of water; the golden eagle will be inspiration to excel in all fields of endeavour and will be the rallying and unifying force for all Canadians.

In order to face the challenges of the future and rise above that which pulls us apart, let Cana-

dians join hands for the soaring golden eagle over the very submissive beaver.

"Don't leave it to Beaver"
"A Mari Usque Ad Mare"

Sincerely,
GARY SLIMON
Founding Director
The Canadian
Wildlife & Wilderness
Art Museum

Dishonest deceitful

Sir:

Canadians are presently being coerced by certain government ministers, academics and senators, into believing that changes to the Constitution should be recommended and presented to the public by a select group of politicians who best represent the people of Canada.

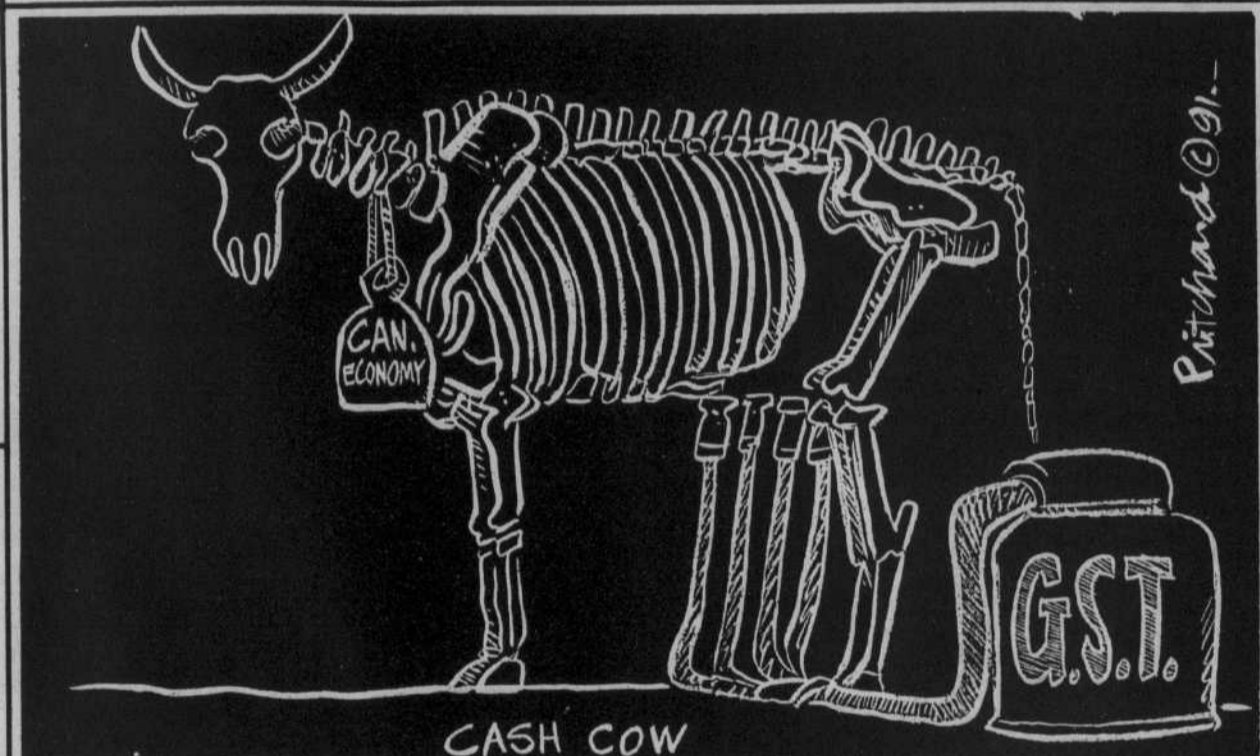
The problem with this suggestion is to find politicians in the present government who have any semblance of representing the people of Canada.

The present PC government, enjoying less than 15 per cent of support of the electorate, can hardly be called representative of Canadians. It has proved itself so dishonest, deceitful, autocratic and corrupt that it has forfeited the public faith and trust.

It is both irresponsible and reprehensible for Canadians to permit a government of this status to tamper with the Constitution. Canadians should insist upon an election prior to effecting any changes to the fundamental laws and principles which govern the country.

To allow constitutional change under the present circumstances could spell disaster and the probable demise of this great country, Canada.

J.J. STEWART
Bishton



A moral way out of the CPR mess in N. Hatley

Dear Editor,

It's been a year now since I wrote a piece for your commentary section regarding the future of the east shore of Lake Massawippi, where the famous abandoned CPR rail line runs. I took flak at the time for some of the things I said. People thought I was exaggerating the threat of real-estate speculation.

It's worth looking back. The land in question is about to be purchased by a group headed by powerful local real-estate developers. Millions of dollars are involved.

This deal was hustled through before the study jointly undertaken by Sentier Massawippi and

the provincial government was able to evaluate the feasibility of a lakeside park. There are now no checks at all against uncontrolled development of this land, which is zoned white.

Commentary

By Frank Harding
Ayer's Cliff

Now we're starting to read stories about lakeside residents who are being cut out of the deal. They will lose land that their families have used for decades. Expect more to come forward. There are many in similar situations.

Expect fences to the waterline, cutting off open walking areas

that have existed for more than a century. Expect condominiums and motorboat docks by the score. Expect lots of people to lose land that they've been renting for generations.

It's sad, CP justifies this sale by stating that it has a responsibility to turn a profit for its shareholders. They conveniently ignore the fact that the people who will lose their places are the same people who have been paying the railway's bills for a very long time. These people are taxpayers, and CP is a prime recipient of government subsidies.

LEGAL?

Is this sale even legal? Much of the land is ballast and fill, exten-

ding well out from the original shore of the lake. As such, there's a question as to whether much of it legally exists.

There is a moral way out of this mess, one that protects the privacy of the lakeside residents and preserves the serenity of the lakeshore. Couldn't Massawippi Group, (the coalition of purchasers) form a land trust, one which would essentially preserve the status quo as regards rentals and land ownership, and would leave the track-bed open as a walking path for the use of the residents only? Exclusively? Could they do this kind thing for one another?

It would prevent a lot of hard feelings and heartbreak.

Future threat: The single nuclear missile

By Nicholas Doughty

BRUSSELS (Reuters) — During the Cold War, the West was haunted by the threat of a nuclear holocaust, with missiles streaking through the skies to wipe out millions on two continents.

Now, with the Cold War over but lessons of the Gulf War still fresh, western strategists have a more insidious worry — the risk that a maverick developing country might launch a missile.

Tipped with a nuclear or chemical warhead, it could wipe out a city.

Such weapons are easy to hide and not yet subject to effective arms control.

Missiles launched from the Middle East or North Africa could hit southern Europe with ease.

"We don't have to face the holocaust with the Soviet Union any longer," said one senior NATO official. "What we face is the prospect of a holocaust in miniature, far more unpredictable, far harder to stop."

As a result, the world's major industrialized nations are now thinking of ways to protect themselves and prevent developing countries from getting missile technology.

MORE CAPABLE

"We estimate that in 10 years time there will be some 15 developing countries who will have the capabilities to produce ballistic missiles," U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said earlier this

year.

"They will be short and interim-range missiles and about half of them will have nuclear warheads to put on top of them."

The United States leads the field in developing anti-missile defences. But its European allies — after watching Iraq launch Scud missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War — are showing an increasingly keen interest.

NATO defence ministers discussed the issue in depth for the first time at a meeting in Brussels in May.

"Our missile defence was always planned to defend military units and military installations," NATO's top commander in Europe, U.S. Gen. John Galvin, said recently. "If we have someone who wants to kill cities, we are faced by a different picture."

STAR WARS SHIFT

As Iraq launched Scuds at Israeli cities towards the end of January, President George Bush ordered a shift of emphasis in the multibillion-dollar U.S. "Star Wars" program, conceived in the 1980s as a defence against Soviet missile attack.

The result was GPALS — global protection against limited strikes. The key part of the program will focus on defences against medium and shorter-range missiles, fired at cities or military installations from

anywhere in the world.

Stephen Hadley, assistant U.S. secretary of defense for international security policy, told a panel of the U.S. Senate that better systems were needed despite some success in shooting down Iraqi Scuds with U.S. Patriot missiles.

The United States has also agreed to pay three-quarters of the cost of Israel's Arrow anti-missile program.

On the European front, France, Italy and Spain are developing a new generation of missiles, similar to the Patriot, which could be used to shoot down either aircraft or missiles.

MOSCOW'S CONCERN

Hadley said it would also be in Moscow's interests to work with Washington in countering "this mutual threat," since many of the developing countries with ballistic missiles or plans to develop them are on the periphery of the Soviet Union.

These countries include communist North Korea, suspected of pursuing a nuclear weapons program, Pakistan, India and Iran, diplomats say.

Other countries that worry the West are Algeria — also alleged to be developing a nuclear program — Libya and Syria.

Israel is believed to have nuclear weapons, although it will neither confirm nor deny this, and has developed medium-range ballistic missiles.

Some rockets available to developing countries, like the Scud, are old and crude but can still penetrate slack defences. Others, using more sophisticated technology, can fly hundreds of kilometres and hit targets with pinpoint accuracy.

LIMIT SPREAD

Beyond establishing a new defensive shield against such weapons, the United States has urged other countries to limit the spread of technology that could help more countries acquire them.

Groupings like the Missile Technology Control Regime, which the Soviet Union has said it would like to join, or the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty have tried for years to stop the spread.

Britain and France — with the United States, among the world's biggest exporters of arms and technology — have also spoken out against the proliferation of missiles. But, even if there is fresh political will, progress is likely to be slow.

"You won't get countries like Israel or Syria to scrap the weapons they already have," said one NATO official, who asked not to be identified.

"The question is whether we can stop technology slipping through the net to lots of other countries who have ambitions to become major regional powers," he added. "Any of them might turn out to be tomorrow's Saddam Hussein."