

Border tax an opportunity to shop at home

U.S. President Bill Clinton's proposal to charge admission to enter the United States is unneighborly, but perhaps it will make Canadians think twice before spending their hard earned dollars in the land of the not-so-free.

While cross-border shopping has plummeted over the past few years, many Canadian dollars are still being drained south by vacationers and border residents who can't resist a deal on such things as milk, butter and gas.

There's a lot to be said for shopping at home, including the fact that it supports our local businesses. Buying dairy products at Grand Union in Newport is an insult to dairy farmers in the Coaticook region who support the local economy.

Buying products made in your home town, in your region encourages local merchants, creates jobs, and improves the overall regional economic picture. Sure there are still some deals at Grand Union, but creating jobs in Vermont and further south will have no spinoff benefits here at home.

American senators fear that Clinton's border tax will damage the nation's economy by discouraging Canadian tourists who leave over \$1 billion each year in the U.S. They are probably right. But if that money stays at home, it could be a mini-boom to local economies.

And even if Clinton's tax grab is dropped, at least it will have caused border-hopping Canadians to reflect on the reasons why they spend so much time and money in the U.S.

RITA LEGAULT

Communications via machinery

Author John Ralston Saul has doubts about the merits of the information highway. An excerpt from a speech on the subject, printed in the Bulletin, a University of Toronto newspaper:

The information highway, which according to our government and most western governments is the tool that is going to change our civilization... is primarily a tool for selling, if you talk to the people involved with it.

As for teaching students through computer systems, particularly in elementary schools, this practice appears extremely dubious. I don't know how a room filled with 30 students facing a screen, rather than each other and a teacher, can be presented as an advance in civilization.

What civilization requires, particularly democracies, is structured communications between humans. Instead, we are concentrating on communications with and sometimes via machinery.

This can be seen in two ways. It is a return to the medieval monastic tradition of avoiding human relationships by staring at your text and making notes in the margin, or it is giving in to our weakness for treating technology as a purpose rather than a tool.

The purpose of the printing press, for example, was not to train millions of printers but to make knowledge available. The way we deal with modern technologies is as if the technology were the content itself.

From *What Canada Thinks*, a regular feature of *The Canadian Press*

Today in History

Albert Johnson, called the Mad Trapper of Rat River, was shot and killed 63 years ago today — in 1932 — by RCMP officers, following a fierce gunbattle in the northern Yukon. Johnson had eluded police after wounding an officer investigating a complaint about traplines on Dec. 31, 1931. One policeman was killed and another wounded during a 48-day chase before Johnson died at Rat River.

Also on this day in: 1869 — The Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was organized.

1919 — Sir Wilfrid Laurier, eighth prime minister of Canada, died.

1962 — Raging floods in North Sea coastlands killed 343 people in West Germany.

1965 — Prime Minister Lester Pearson announced that old-age pensions would be payable at age 65 instead of 70.

Did you know that?

STRONG WINDS

A cyclone is a storm with strong winds rotating about a moving centre of low atmospheric pressure.

FLASH FLOOD

A flash flood is a sudden, violent flood. It typically occurs after a heavy rain or the melting of a heavy snow.

Letter to the Editor

What about obligations to the community?

Dear Charles,

I would like to correct an error in your article of Feb. 6 on the proposed land sales by Sentier Massawippi to homeowners in Tomifobia. I was not interviewed by the reporter for this article and never stated that "CP got just \$25 per acre when they divested themselves of the railbed." In fact, the correct amount is closer to \$250 per acre.

During negotiations for the sale of the land from CPR to Sentier Massawippi, local residents were assured by the CPR that their interests would be protected. In response to an effort on my part to exercise a right of first refusal on the land under my shop, I received a letter from Mr. I. B. Scott (CEO of CPR) dated Feb. 24, 1992 which states "I believe we are in a position to take steps to help you secure the portion of the property that you occupy. Mr. Lapierre tells me that he hopes to meet with you either March 2 or 3 to move ahead on the situation." This was followed by a letter from Keith Baxter of Sentier Massawippi to Marc Lapierre (Manager, Land Marketing, CPR) dated April 8, 1992 and states "...we intend, as soon as we are legally in a position to do so, to enter into negotiations with each of the concerned parties (Messrs. Jensen, Fortier, Grenier, and Mrs. Bishop, as well as Mr.

Robert Gaul, Mr. Gerber, and the Municipality of Ogden itself) with a view to selling the appropriate parcels to each of these parties at a fair market value."

Nothing happened. I rewrote Mr. Scott and received a reply from J. J. Coté (Vice-President, CPR) on Aug. 12/93 stating "The deed of sale... was effectively derogatory in January 1993 and it was our understanding that it was the intent of the purchaser to enter into negotiations shortly thereafter with yourself (and other tenants) to discuss the eventual sale of the parcel(s) under lease on the basis of their fair market value... I was thus surprised to hear that this matter was still not resolved..."

What is fair market value? All the property under question is zoned green by the CPTAQ and zoned agricultural by the Municipality of Ogden. All structures are presently derogatory to zoning bylaws and exist by acquired rights. No building permits could be obtained for any of these lots. The current municipal evaluation is roughly \$250 per acre — this is fair market value. Sentier Massawippi has offered to sell me roughly 1/8 acre for \$1500. Offers to other residents are similarly inflated. Interestingly, Sentier Massawippi recently contested the municipal

evaluation and, for property tax purposes, successfully had the land devalued by the MRC evaluators.

In reality, the bulk of the land offered has no resale value whatsoever as it could never be built on. As Keith Baxter points out in the article, the net effect of the land transfer would be to "clean up the titles in what is an insecure situation", a sort of notarial housekeeping.

The Municipality of Ogden offered to acquire the land Sentier Massawippi owns under the road in Tomifobia strictly to alleviate Sentier Massawippi of its liability in owning a public road, Sentier Massawippi has requested \$400 plus costs for this privilege. The municipal council must also abide by the clause "to allow and support the use of the land by Sentier Massawippi bordering this lot as a nature trail and linear park used by people on foot, bicycle, horseback or skis." Just on basic principles of democracy and free speech we would not sign this, even if we were in 100 per cent agreement with the project.

Keith Baxter asserted in the Feb. 6 article that conditions are attached to guarantee the long term interests of Sentier Massawippi's members and benefactors and that "we have an obligation to our mem-

bers to bring some revenues from these sales." What about obligations to the community and to promises made? His assertion that the needs of Sentier Massawippi outweigh the needs of the local community and that he is prepared to finance the project, through land sales, on the backs of the local people illustrates how out of touch his group is with the aspirations of the community or, indeed, with the *raison d'être* of community groups. His priorities are telling.

Members of Sentier Massawippi have taken this trail debate far too personally. On some level, they must understand that we are fighting for a say in our future. Instead of expressing anger, Baxter should be encouraging dialogue in the community and be more open to local concerns and aspirations.

If the proposed project is no longer the tourist development scheme that it started out as but is now some kind of "land trust" or "nature preserve" Sentier Massawippi might find more allies in the neighborhood than they imagine. This new outlook might be surprisingly close to goals that local groups aspired to before Sentier Massawippi literally bought the land out from under them.

NEILS JENSEN
Tomifobia



Should dangerous offenders be identified?

By Scott Edmonds

The Canadian Press

It was an unseasonably warm fall afternoon last September when 13-year-old Sarah Kelly went for her last walk in The Pas, Man.

The blond girl's stroll was cut short by Robert Bliss Arthurson, a known pedophile whose violent fantasies had long caused grave concern but had gone untreated.

Arthurson snatched Sarah off the street, took her to an isolated spot and strangled her.

Today he's serving life in prison for second-degree murder and Sarah's mother, Mary Kelly, is fighting to arm other parents with information she was denied.

Though Arthurson's reputation was well known to police and a handful of victims and their families in the town of 8,000, it was news to Kelly.

"I didn't know who he was at all," she says.

SYSTEM NO HELP

The system was of little help to those whose paths he crossed, perhaps because his crimes — exposing himself, soliciting minors — did not involve violence.

"They'd press charges and he'd just get probation after probation." Police didn't warn the community about Arthurson because they felt they didn't have the authority.

Now Manitoba is trying to remedy that. A new government committee will review cases to determine if

the public should be notified that a sexual offender is nearby.

"I just wish it had been thought of as being important enough to do six months ago," says Kelly. "I would have my child here today if it was."

Kelly and family members in New Brunswick are sending a petition to Ottawa calling on MPs to take similar action.

"We should have a national tracking system," she says.

"We should also have tougher sentencing for them. I really don't think they should be allowed out on parole."

NOT COMPROMISED

Kelly rejects suggestions that the rights of sexual offenders may be compromised.

"No one's talking about my

child's constitutional rights or the public's rights."

Dave, sitting in his tiny cluttered Winnipeg apartment, doesn't think it's so black and white.

"It's much more a grey issue," says the bearded 46-year-old, who also comes from New Brunswick.

He has just finished serving four years in a federal prison for sexually abusing his adopted son. Splashing his picture across the front page now wouldn't help him or those he made suffer, he says.

"It's not me that they would be hurting as much as my brothers, my friends, my sisters, my victim. It's these people that would be taking abuse."

Dave says he "learned" to be an abuser at the hands of a family member and priests when he went to a Roman Catholic school in Saint

John.

"But that's no excuse," he adds quickly.

CHANGING PATTERN

He's trying to change the pattern through counselling which, he says, is helping.

Dave and Kelly agree on one thing — offenders should be treated.

Dave says until quite recently, those in Stony Mountain Penitentiary near Winnipeg weren't even encouraged to get help. Sex offenders were told to hide their crimes, to avoid making themselves targets for other prisoners.

"If they just go in prison and sit, nothing's changing. They sit there and get bitter and they're going to come out with a very big chip on their shoulders."

Facts on convicted sex offenders

By The Canadian Press

Facts on convicted sex offenders and the debate about how to control them on release from prison:

HOW MANY: About 2,700 in federal prisons. About 1,000 on the streets either on parole or having served their full sentence.

THE PROBLEM: A relatively small number of those released from prison commit new crimes. But widespread publicity, fear and anger surround those who do.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS: Indefinite sentences for those considered likely to reoffend; increased use of mental health laws to detain dangerous prisoners

scheduled to be released; improved monitoring of those on the streets; police warnings to affected communities.

PRIVACY ACT: Under the federal act, the name of a convicted sex offender who has served his prison sentence can only be released if the public interest outweighs any invasion of privacy.

CRITICISM: Legal and constitutional problems with proposed solutions; possibility plans could backfire by preventing reintegration of offenders into community.

THE EXPERTS SAY: It's impossible to be 100 per cent accurate in predicting who will reoffend.