

Halton Hills Outlook

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Their Outlook

Humor

I'm a preferred status prospect



Weir's View
By Ian Weir

It's a warm and delightful feeling to look in your mailbox one morning and discover that you have just become a Preferred Status Prospect.

It's true. I have just received a terribly nice letter from Karen Porges, an obviously splendid person, who turns out to be the vice-president of card marketing for American Express Canada Inc.

Karen writes: "I am pleased to tell you that you have been specially selected as a Preferred Status prospect for American Express Cardmembership."

"Preferred Status means that you are one of a limited group of Canadians American Express believes is likely to qualify for Cardmembership."

Karen goes on to outline the many advantages of carrying an American Express card, and concludes her letter with the reminder that this card "says everything about you. Apply today."

Well...well gosh, Karen. What does a fellow say, at a time like this? "I've never been a preferred status prospect for anything - just ask my girlfriend. And now, right out of the blue..."

It's really terribly flattering. Already I feel a sense of spiritual kinship with Peter Ustinov and have spent much of the morning exclaiming: "That's not my briefcase! Those aren't even my briefs!"

Still, this does raise a nagging question. To wit: how does someone

Poets' Corner

ANTICIPATING
I feel you moving restlessly,
As the time keeps drawing near,
You'll enter into this busy world,
Not having anything to fear.

I've seen you grow these past 9 months,
I've felt your every move,
I'm looking forward to all the years,
And all the tears I'll have to soothe.

Maybe on a busy day
I'll be very impatient with you
But just remember that I'll love all
The good and bad things you'll do.

I'll do the best I can for you,
That's what a mother is for,
I'll guide you and teach you
Till the day you leave my door.

So until the day you arrive,
I'll anticipate you with joy,
I'll love you through good and bad
Whether you are girl or boy.

LINDA D. Palmer

get to be "specially selected" for something like this?

You've undoubtedly had the experience of being specially selected yourself. Probably this was revealed to you in a form letter which announced that you were part of a lucky minority which was being offered a special rate on magazines you wouldn't be caught dead reading.

But we're not talking Better Homes and Gardens, here. We're talking about a no-spending-limit credit card. So how did I manage to get "specially selected" as "one of a limited group of Canadians" whom American Express holds in particularly high esteem?

If the selection was made on the basis of my earning-power, then that limited group must be large enough to cover almost anyone who doesn't collect empty cans from Smithrite bins.

It's possible, perhaps, that American Express bases its "special selections" on recommendations from other credit card companies. If so, they may have heard about me from the nice people at Visa, with whom I've always had an amiable relationship.

Every month the nice people at Visa send me a bill. Every month I file it carefully away with all the other bills on top of the fridge.

Every third or fourth month they offer to send a nice man to my door who will seize my card, cut it up into small pieces, fling them to the floor, and jump up and down on them. At this point I send them just enough money to get within a few dollars of my credit limit, and we're friends again for another couple of months.

But somehow or other, Karen Porges has the idea that I'm a Preferred Status Prospect. Which creates a terrible dilemma - because if I fill out the application form, Karen is going to be awfully disillusioned.

There are, for instance, two nasty little blanks which ask about "nature of business" and "annual earnings".

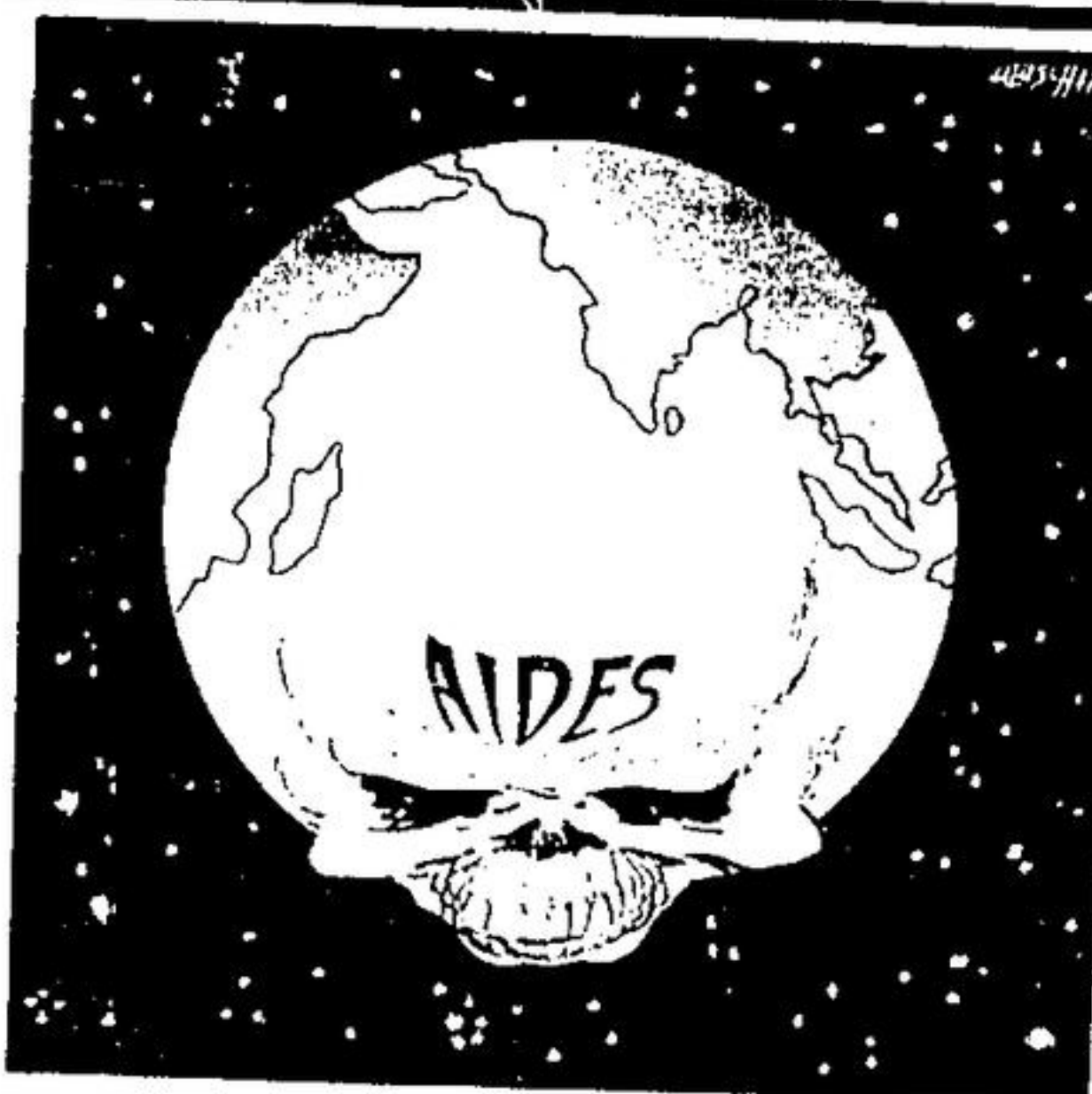
There are many who can fill in such blanks boldly and confidently. Then there are those of us who would have to enter "doubtful" in the first blank and "quite a bit less than Wayne Gretzky, really" in the second.

Worse yet, there is a particularly disconcerting section which asks what kind of bank accounts you have. There are blanks for chequing, savings and loans accounts. There is not, unfortunately, a blank for "overdrawn account".

All things considered, I'm going to have to pass on Karen's kind invitation to apply for my American Express card today - despite her thoughtful reminder that the card offers "unparalleled protection, security and convenience".

I'll just have to stick to my own unparalleled protection and security system, specially recommended for Persons of No Status whatsoever:

An over-the-limit Visa card and (in case of acute emergency) an American dollar-bill stuffed behind the driver's licence. Don't leave home without them.



Zundel affair is really 4 issues



Queen's Park
By Derek Nelson

The Ernst Zundel affair is really four different issues that are all entangled.

One issue is the specific conviction of Zundel on one charge of spreading false news.

The Ontario Court of Appeal later decided the trial judge erred and ordered a new trial.

Attorney-General Ian Scott now has announced he will appeal that decision.

But the Zundel case is really a symbol of much wider issues.

After all, Zundel was acquitted on a second charge of spreading false news - something about a Zionist-Freemason-Communist-banker conspiracy against Islam. Are we to assume that in this instance Zundel was telling the truth?

The real issues are three: -What are the limits of free speech in Canadian society?

-How should society react to the publication of views that cause emotional agony for people?

-What is the responsibility of the media in covering issues and trials arising out of the existence of zealots like Zundel?

NDP Leader Bob Rae touched on the first two of these elements in approving the Scott appeal.

Scott himself said all that was needed on the third point when he suggested the question of publicity for Zundel was "entirely in the hands of a free press to decide. You know who to ask about that."

Rae, meanwhile, had asked "why is it in 1987 we have to force the survivors of the Holocaust to prove it happened?"

"If I could speak personally, to establish that her entire family was wiped out by the Nazis, strikes me as an incredible ordeal to ask of any one individual and an extraordinary ordeal to demand of a community," he said.

No one, of course, asked the survivors to prove the Holocaust happened.

Other than (formerly) obscure pamphleteers like Zundel, who doubted or doubts it?

Rae favors amending the current law forbidding group hatred to make convictions easier. This would also remove the need to use the false news section of the Criminal Code.

The aim would be to "make it financially impossible for (Zundels) to operate and for them to spread their hatred throughout the province."

In other words, the answer of Rae and others is to selectively narrow the bounds of free speech.

Selective, because it is not NDP policy to make hatred against an identifiable class ("the rich" or landlords, or doctors, for example) a crime.

But for the favored groups that would be protected, it seems clear the law would act for the sole reason that people's feelings would have been hurt (see Rae above).

The point should be clear here: Zundel wasn't advocating violence or genocide against a group (ironically, he was denying that a particular genocide actually took place).

One can have sympathy for people who feel mental anguish because of what has been written about a group of which they are a member, whether it be their ethnic origin, nationality or even their class.

But emotional pain is a very subjective thing, and much in life can cause it.

Mandating the state to soothe such agony is hardly a legitimate use of such a mighty weapon.

MP's Report



John McDermid

Parliament resumed sitting on January 19th following a holiday recess. There have been numerous initiatives taken by the government over the past few months and in order to bring my constituents up-to-date on government business in this New Year, I will briefly outline a few such initiatives.

CHALLENGE '87: \$180 million for student summer jobs

The federal government's student summer job program will receive \$180 million in funding for 1987. The Challenge employment program, now in its third year of operation, helps students to find summer jobs and to develop entrepreneurial skills. An evaluation of last year's program indicates 80 per cent of the 80,000 jobs created were a direct result of government support. During the summer of 1986, some 142 jobs were created under this program in Brampton-Georgetown. Further information and application forms will be available in early February at Canada Employment Centres across the country.

Daytime running lights on new cars

Transport Minister John Crosbie has released the specifications for the mandatory installation of daytime running lights on new cars. The new regulation specifies that as of September 1988, any new vehicle manufactured with a daytime running light system must meet the technical requirements of the federal government. After December 1, 1989, it will be mandatory that all vehicles manufactured in Canada or imported into Canada be fitted with a daytime running light system. The new safety feature will reduce daytime multiple vehicle collisions by 10 to 20 per cent, and save up to \$200 million a year in medical and property damage costs.

Environmental protection legislation proposed

Draft legislation on environmental protection has been released jointly by Environment Minister Tom McMillan and Health and Welfare Minister Jake Epp. The government would have broad new powers to protect the environment and introduce life-cycle management of toxic chemicals. In the next few months, the legislation will be reviewed by the provinces, industry, and labor and environmental groups before being presented to Parliament in 1987. If accepted, it would give Canadians some of the toughest environmental protection measures in the Western hemisphere.

Softwood lumber settlement protects Canadian sovereignty

Canada will not have to pay an onerous 15 per cent duty on softwood lumber exports to the United States as a result of a settlement reached between the two governments. Instead, the federal government will collect an equivalent export tax, thereby ensuring that the money remains in Canada. The agreement will also protect Canada's control over its forestry resources, because the provinces will retain control over the stumpage fees they charge lumber companies.