

# Halton Hills Outlook

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## Their Outlook

### Parliamentary life surprisingly serene

Considering what outside economists are saying these days, it seems to me that Finance Minister Michael Wilson is enjoying a surprisingly serene parliamentary life.

It used to be that finance ministers, such as Walter Gordon, John Turner and John Crosbie, had to escape the confines of the Commons to find any political peace. Of all the ministers in government, it was usually the finance minister who was under the heaviest fire.

Perhaps it's because of the obsession with scandal, or our preoccupation with free trade, or the dominance of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney—or the lack of heavy artillery on the opposition benches—in any event, the finance minister is certainly no longer the government's parliamentary cannon fodder.

Remarkably, Mr. Wilson is having far more difficulty with outside think-tanks than he is with his political enemies. In fact, he is having a great deal of difficulty with assorted economic experts, although you would never know this from parliamentary proceedings.

Transport Minister John Crosbie who, as finance minister, was widely blamed for bringing down the Joe Clark government with his proposed 18-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax, must wonder about the justice of it all.

Mr. Wilson is being accused of everything from financial trickery to fiscal film flim, and he's scarcely scorched politically.

**STRONG WORDS**  
The latest criticism comes from the prestigious C. D. Howe Institute which says the government's deficit-reduction strategy is way off track, and the minister is hiding the fact with fiscal trickery. "A careful examination of the budget indicates clearly that the fiscal plan established in the February, 1986, budget is seriously off track", says the Institute's report.

The report, written by economist Ted Carmichael, goes on to say that the reduction of \$2.4 billion in this year's deficit was not as sizeable as it appears. It was made possible on-

ly by the last-minute sale of Teleglobe Canada for \$450 million and by delaying the payment of \$700 million to grain farmers until after March 31.

But, continued the report, the government "reserved its nastiest gimmick for fiscal year 1987-88" by accelerating remittances by employers of employee tax, unemployment insurance and pension deductions. Only by shifting some of these payments to the coming fiscal year, rather than the following one, was the minister able to project a budgetary deficit of \$29.3 billion, says the report.

The government has "resorted to asset sales and fiscal tricks." Coming from Liberals or New Democrats this statement wouldn't stand out, but it's unusually strong stuff from the C. D. Howe Institute.

It was only a few days ago that the prime minister said his government had "broken the vicious cycle of budget deficits."

**OTHERS DIFFER**  
Not only is the method of budgetary reduction being questioned, but the Conference Board of Canada—another prestigious outfit—is predicting that the deficit will actually begin to rise this year, and rise even further next year.

Furthermore, we have the Canadian Development Institute saying flatly that "our federal-provincial governments are broke, and yet, not a penny cut from federal spending."

This damning assessment bears little resemblance to the views of Mr. Wilson in his Feb. 18 budget. "If I had to choose just one message for Canadians today," he said, "it would be this: Our economic renewal program is working."

He went on to say that since this government assumed office, economic growth has averaged 3.5 per cent a year, and there was "no reason for the party to end." He actually predicted a 1987 growth rate of 2.8 per cent.

However, at the same time, the Conference Board was predicting a rate of only 1.9 per cent.



### Media make experts of touring MPPs

Toronto: It is marvellous how the media make instant experts out of people simply because of their job titles.

The latest to achieve this dubious honor are the six Ontario MPPs who made a flying one-week visit to Nicaragua in mid-March.

It isn't the MPPs' fault, of course, that they are now Nicaragua experts. It's the media system.

But since they are now quotable on the subject it raises a question. Are the six of them apologists for a Marxist dictatorship or perceptive admirers of a new society?

The answer actually isn't as simple as it might appear.

It is true New Democrat David Warner, who I thought had more sense, is claiming he knows Nicaragua inside out as a result of his fleeting visit. He has written President Ronald Reagan to that effect.

But even the other five MPPs (New Democrats Richard Johnston, Karl Morin-Strom and David Reville plus Liberals Christine Hart and Joan Smith) returned with generally nice things to say about Nicaragua's ruling Sandinistas.

Yet none of the MPPs suggested Nicaragua is a democracy in the Canadian sense of the word. While they accept its claim for "political pluralism"—presumably meaning political choice—they acknowledge it is flawed.

But, then, they make the dual excuses that the democracy is both young and hobbled by the war against the U.S.-supported rebels known as Contras.

Most important, all agreed it was in transition, moving in the right direction.

Yet...and this is where interpretation gets tricky. Using the same impressions, they could have formed an alternative view (as I do, and I was there, too).

That view would have noted the boundaries of Nicaraguan political pluralism are very narrow; that the transition increasingly looks like it isn't towards North American-style democracy but away from it, and that the war is an excuse for San-

dinista repression and control, not a cause (that, in fact, Sandinista tyranny caused the war in the first place).

Either view might be right. The MPPs chose the one favorable to the Sandinistas.

But, then, during their trip they rarely got to hear any message that would contradict the official view.

Government officials of one sort or another filled most of the agenda, and of the three non-Marxist parties they were to meet, one didn't show up and the second proved to be only a pro-Sandinista dissident faction within that party.

The third was Mauricio Diaz of the branch of the Social Christians. The larger part of that party boycotted the 1984 Nicaraguan Assembly elections as being unfair. We met none of the abstainers.

Morin-Strom asked Diaz whether those elections were free and democratic (although no one asked him about the Sandinista suppression of the Social Christian-oriented labor group CTN).

Diaz said he declined to use words like "just" or "honest" to describe them, but added that they were "acceptable." Democracy is still young in Nicaragua and imperfection is to be expected.

While there "might have been fraud," the results probably reflected the true situation in the country that year, he added.

About half the electorate voted for the Sandinistas, one-quarter for the opposition, while the remaining one-quarter either didn't vote or officially abstained (how many did which is unclear).

Then Diaz made the point that keeps him trying.

It is that the Sandinistas say they believe in the principle of political pluralism. And since there is now a constitution that guarantees pluralism (as of January this year) "we should take it and demand it be applied," he said.

The constitution, for all its defects such as its consecration of Sandinista control of the army, can be used as a "means of civic political struggle."

### Cancer Society not a part of Research group

Dear Sir,  
Recently, local businesses and organizations have received requests for support from the Cancer Research Society Inc. As a result of many phone calls to our offices, we are writing you to clear up any confusion or misunderstanding that may exist.

The Canadian Cancer Society is not affiliated with, or connected in any way, to the Cancer Research Society Inc., which is a Quebec-based organization.  
Prior to 1981, Cancer Research Society Inc.'s fundraising efforts were confined to the Province of Quebec. But since that time, they have solicited funds all across Canada, although most of their research grants are confined to Quebec.

The main concentration of cancer research in Canada is done through the National Cancer Institute of Canada, with about 98 per cent of their funding provided by the Canadian Cancer Society. As far as we have been able to ascertain, the N.C.I.C. has never received any funding from the Cancer Research Society Inc.

The Canadian Cancer Society, established in 1938, is the national organization which provides assistance to cancer patients in a number of ways including drugs, dressings, and transportation to treatment centres. It is also involved in an extensive public education program. No such services are provided by the Cancer Research Society Inc.

We of the Canadian Cancer Society wish to place this information before you to clear up any confusion between the two organizations.  
Yours sincerely,  
Barbara Johnson

### Time for life

Dear Sir:  
Easter is a time of new life and new beginnings. But for the 40 million destitute blind of the Third World there are few new beginnings. Poverty has doomed them to darkness and despair.

There is an all Canadian organization, Operation Eyesight Universal, which brings eye treatment and educational programs to the destitute blind of Asia, Africa, Bangladesh and many other countries where there is a need.

Operation Eyesight Universal started about 25 years ago and I have been an admirer of them for many years. I marvel by managing donations so well that 90 cents out of every dollar of income is used in curing the remedial blind.

A tax deductible donation of \$25 covers the cost of surgery, food, hospital stay, post operative care and glasses. It's a real miracle.

Miracles can happen and are happening. We in Canada can help to make those blind eyes see again. Donations may be sent to Operation Eyesight Universal, P.O. Box 123, Stn. "M", Calgary, Alberta T2P 2J6. They issue receipts for income tax purposes. What better way to celebrate Easter than to give someone a new life and a new beginning.

Sincerely,  
Lois Aiger  
4615-14th St. S.W.  
Calgary, Alberta  
T2T 3Y5

