

Halton Hills Outlook

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Their Outlook

An opportune time for cabinet shuffle



Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

If ever there was an opportune time for a cabinet shuffle, it seems to me, it's right now.

It needn't be a big one - although one could make a rather compelling argument for that, too - but a couple of key changes could make a world of difference where it really counts. And where it counts for the Brian Mulroney government now is in the area of free trade.

That is, as they say, the Big Ticket item in the government's agenda - the issue on which the Conservatives are effectively staking their future. It goes without saying that anything this important must be handled with exceeding care. Kid gloves, so to speak.

But free trade is not being handled that way. Without fear of contradiction, one can say the government has not been doing a good job of selling free trade to Canadians. I mean, when pollsters find that fully 42 per cent of us are unaware that we have negotiated a free-trade accord with the United States, something must be wrong.

Of those who were aware, 62 per cent thought the Americans got the best of the deal.

Professor John Crispo of the University of Toronto, a free-trade booster, was guilty only of understatement when he said, "I don't think anyone could effectively deny that the government has not done a good job in selling free trade."

NEED CHANGE

We're not dealing here with the merits of free trade - just the sales campaign.

It seems to me that if Prime Minister Mulroney takes a good close look at his free-trade marketing team, studies speeches, news conference tapes, and watches the personality clashes in and around Parliament, he might want to consider some cabinet changes. Free trade is not going to be sold

through partisan rhetoric, the exchange of insults or needless accusations.

Most of all, it's not going to be sold through extravagant claims that can't be proven.

That stuff may be okay for a regional job-creation program, or the purchase of new helicopters, but free trade is too important, not to mention complex. What we need here is, among other things, credibility. And you don't have to spend much time watching Parliament in operation to realize the added value of likeableness.

The personality of sales personnel, particularly in the Commons, can never be overrated.

It's far from certain that Mr. Mulroney put enough emphasis on personalities from the moment free-trade negotiations began. The combination of overstatement - which begins with the prime minister himself - and a definite abrasiveness in and around the negotiations, didn't do much to set the stage for a successful sales campaign.

LOWER KEY

I don't know whether, as some American officials have suggested, the prickly personality of chief negotiator Simon Reisman actually slowed progress during the 16 months of talks. But, I doubt whether his hammer-like bluntness and occasional on-camera rudeness, did much to convert Canadians to the cause of free trade.

And that's really when the sales campaign should have begun.

Mr. Reisman's post-accord comments were even less helpful, particularly that bit about free-trade opponents subscribing to The Big Lie, as practised by the Nazis. He might have known that such a remark would be blown out of all proportion and context.

Anyway, he has completed his basic assignment. And unless he's needed for some specific clean-up operations, the prime minister should thank him for his \$1,000-a-day services and tell him to keep quiet. Sales is not his specialty.

As far as the cabinet is concerned, and that was why we started this column - the prime minister might do well to let the free-trade ball be carried by someone less combative than Trade Minister Pat Carney.

Two's a Crowd

By BILL BUTTLE



"Learn anything at your assertiveness seminar?"

Trade debate makes us do funny things



Your Business

By DIANNE MALEY
 Business Analyst

Free trade makes people do funny things. Just thinking about it made James Fulton, New Democrat MP from Skena, B.C., call Prime Minister Brian Mulroney "scum, lying scum."

Talking about it made Simon Reisman, Canada's chief trade negotiator, accuse his opponents of engaging in intellectual terrorism, and of using the same lying techniques as the Nazis.

And in a most ungentlemanly outburst, Conservative MP William Kemping called Liberal MP Sheila Copps a name that can't be repeated in a family newspaper.

The honorable member's honor slipped all because of free trade.

The prospect of opening our borders to the Americans strikes fear in the heart of nationalists. To them, Americans are "carpetbaggers with the smell of profits in their nostrils and guns on their hips."

POETS' DEFENCE

At the federal government's hearings the other day, the free-trade fight pitted Margaret Atwood, poet and best-selling author, against Dofasco, the big Hamilton steelmaker. Ms. Atwood doesn't like the idea of free trade, Dofasco does.

This got me thinking about the people who are lining up on either side of the issue. Poets, writers, bishops and union leaders feel strongly that free trade will hurt the country. But they don't make jobs for Canadians.

Dofasco employs more people than Margaret Atwood, 11,500 to be exact. Canadian Pacific, a free-trade supporter, employs 73,500 people in Canada and another 22,200 around the world. Altabi-Price, another free trader, employs 16,000.

Bell Canada Enterprises, a free trader, employs 10,000 people. The Canadian Bankers Association, whose members employ 158,000 people, also supports free trade, as do the 10,000 members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) members employ well over one million people.

What do all these big employers stand to gain from a free-trade pact that would hurt the rest of us? Nothing, as far as I can see.

It seems unlikely that business leaders want to hurt the country. Most big companies have one foot firmly planted in the United States already. Some, like Northern Telecom and Altabi-Price, have factories or mills there. If Canada becomes a difficult place to do business, they could simply pick up the other foot, leaving us in the lurch.

The men and women who run these businesses can move more freely across international borders than most of us can. Many have flats in New York and London and condominiums in Florida. They have little to gain personally if the borders between Canada and the United States break down. The world is already their oyster.

Which leads me to wonder why business people are hitting the road by the dozen to support free trade. They readily acknowledge that the deal is not perfect. Yet they believe deeply that it is a step in the right direction and an opportunity that must be seized.

MULRONEY PROBLEM

Cynics say Canada is the only banana republic that is dumb enough to thumb its nose at a trade deal with the United States. Virtually every other country in the world, would welcome such a deal.

Sadly, some people may be reacting to Mr. Mulroney rather than acting in their own best interests. Environics Research, a Toronto polling company, says the government's campaign to sell free trade is going nowhere because the government is so widely disliked.

Staff Comment



By BRIAN MACLEOD

Wasn't that Mel Lastman a character?

In town to promote his \$3 billion downtown core at a Chamber of Commerce dinner last week Mr. Lastman was full of wild ideas and stories of crazy publicity stunts.

North York's version of the tiny perfect mayor headed up the Bad Boy appliance chain in the '70s.

The position earned him the dubious honor of being named the "Bad Boy of politics."

Mr. Lastman has gained hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of publicity by pulling stunts like selling \$100 notes for 25 cents and selling \$2 notes for \$1.

Ah, but wouldn't it be something to have such an off the wall character as the mayor here in Halton Hills?

Not to take anything away from our hardworking Mayor Russ Miller. His many hours of working on behalf of the town are well documented.

But let's have a look for a minute at how to "spice up" Georgetown and Acton.

Georgetown, it seems, has two downtown areas: Main Street and Highway 7. Acton has its downtown. We could compromise and plop a new modern downtown right on Highway 7 between Georgetown and Acton. Yes, there's plenty of land.

If North York can make a downtown out of three boroughs we can put one in the middle of our two urban centres.

There's a million and one possibilities. We could start a shuttle bus service between the downtown area and Georgetown and Acton.

Mel had a \$250 million collection of bells atop the Petro-Canada Centre called "Mel's Bells."

We could have "Russ's Buses". Instead of trading \$100 for quarters, our mayor could canvass travellers on the buses with hat in hand exchanging deeds to Enterac homes for \$100 notes to pay for the downtown. After all, there's nothing like a little gambling in your life and a deed to a home in Georgetown South fits the bill.

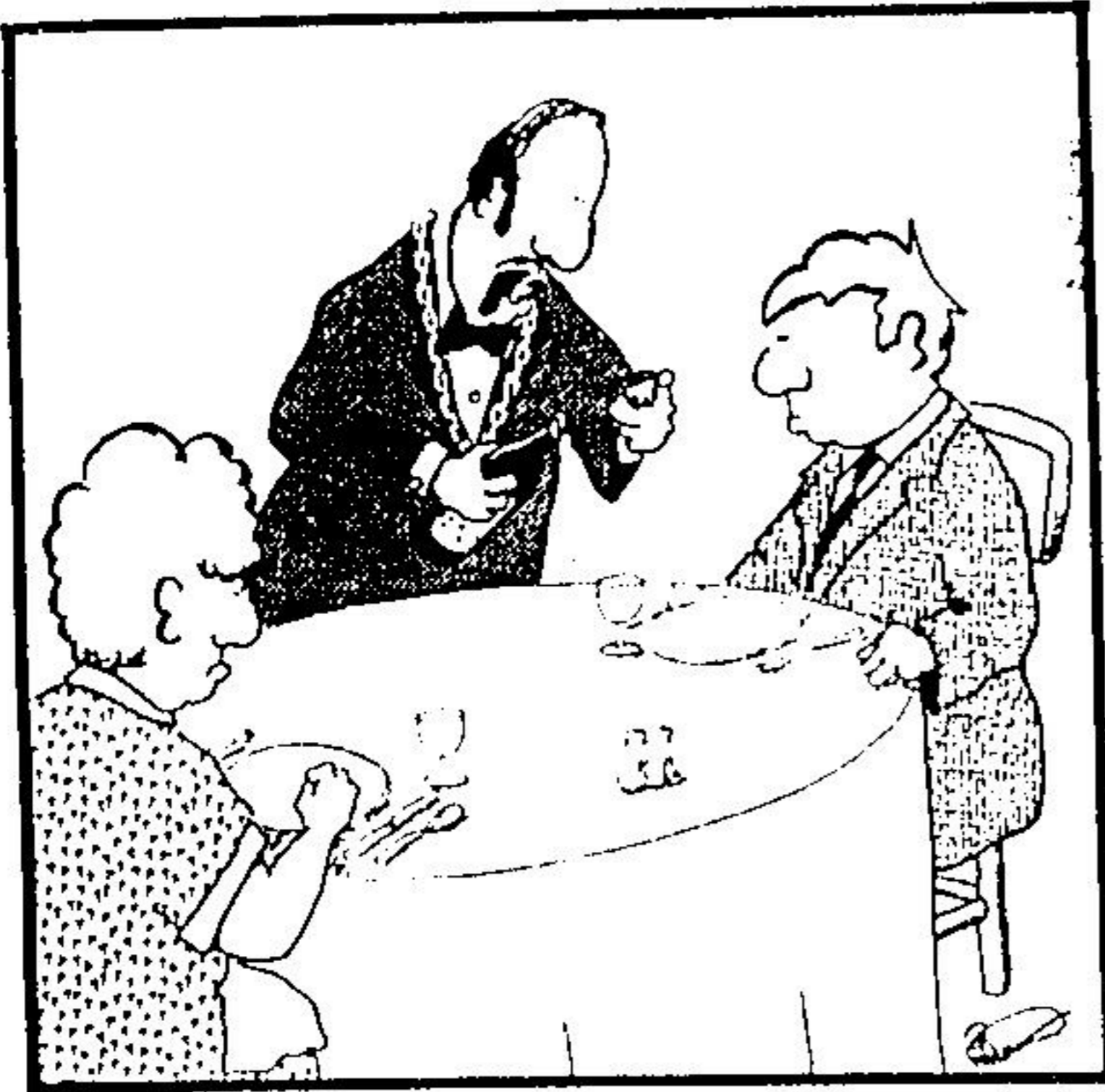
The key to North York's downtown, said Mel, was that the city and the province owned all the land. Well, I'm sure our imaginative council could find ways of acquiring a bit here and a parcel there. Heck, they wouldn't even have to tell us about it. Just one of those dozy little MOPS committee meetings and it's done.

But let's look at the downtown itself. North York has that big square "Bigger than Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto," cries Mel.

No problem. We can beat that. Don't those ever Region conscious councillors in Burlington want to change the boundaries of Halton anyway? We could turn the whole town into one big square. It can't be that hard. Just some new pencil marks on the map. Then we could get rid of that confusing name Halton Hills. (After all, one Halton in Halton is enough.)

But Mel failed in his bid to get the famed stadium. There's still time here in Halton Hills - for a domed Administrative Building. Yes, it could sit proudly in the middle of the square and the retractable roof could automatically open to let out all the hot air every time one of the councillors' speeches lasts longer than five minutes. Nothing like a little rain or snow to douse a long-winded speech, you know.

And it could all be done before next fall's municipal election. Eat your heart out Mel!



"M'sieu will wish to sniff the cap?"