

Halton Hills Outlook

Their Outlook

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Premier's head in sand on Meech Lake Accord



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson
Thomson News Service

The head-in-the-sand attitude of Premier David Peterson to the Meech Lake accord has to end.

To Peterson, the accord is a diamond in the rough. He refuses to propose any changes unless someone can convince him there is overwhelming need.

Well, there is such need. When it comes to language rights, the Meech Lake gem is deeply flawed.

It will enshrine in the constitution dual linguistic standards for this country - a French-only Quebec and bilingualism elsewhere.

Some rather remarkable statements by D'Alberville Fortier, federal official languages commissioner, make that clear.

Fortier, of course, has been widely condemned for pointing out the obvious in his annual report - that the Quebec government's linguistic approach results in the "humbling" or "humiliation" of English.

It is the first time a figure from Canada's francophone establishment has articulated what most anglophone Quebecers feel.

Interestingly, Quebec's elected anglophones - including Prime Minister Brian Mulroney - all scurried for cover. They fear French nationalism and prefer the "hear no evil, see no evil" stance that has marked their decade-long weak-kneed defence of anglophone rights.

On the other hand, unelected anglophones nodded in agreement with Fortier in print and speech.

The repression of English is a fact, something that all the howls of outrage in the francophone media and from francophone politicians can't obscure.

Fortier repeated an observation

made by others, including Quebec anglophone spokesman Royal Orr, who spoke here to the Ontario legislative committee that is examining the Meech Lake deal.

In Quebec, the distinctive nature of that province's society is equated solely with its French aspect.

Yet, as Fortier said, "the distinctiveness of Quebec society seems to us inseparable, both in historical and contemporary terms, from the contribution of the English-speaking community in that province and should be recognized as such."

It isn't, of course. The Meech Lake accord simply recognizes the Quebec government's right to "preserve and promote the distinct society of Quebec," its French component only.

And that brings us back to Peterson.

If he were a unwillingist, someone willing to defend Ontario's century-old tradition as an English-speaking province, then his support for Meech Lake might be understandable.

We Canadians could then retreat into and enshrine our splendid isolations. Quebec would be French, the rest of Canada English, and the federal government (in Ottawa only) bilingual.

But Peterson claims to favor bilingualism, which is why he says he will someday make Ontario officially bilingual.

NDP Leader Bob Rae thinks Peterson should have proclaimed Ontario bilingual yesterday, while Progressive Conservative Leader Andy Brandt says he isn't opposed to official bilingualism. (Brandt's stance, the opposite of former Tory leader Larry Grossman's during the provincial election campaign, shows that same firmness of Tory principle as we saw in issues such as separate school funding and rent control.)

With all of these parties on-side, you would think there might be support from one or more for explicitly including protection for Quebec's anglophones in the Meech Lake accord.

Berry's World



Man goes to jail to keep his Stetson



Weir's View

By Ian Weir
Thomson News Service

Gosh. Just when you've begun to fear that traditional values have gone the way of the Dodo bird, the five-cent cigar and the Liberals' chances of forming the next government, someone comes along and makes a glorious gesture that restores your faith.

This is why we were so moved to read about the chap down in Texas who has chosen to go to jail rather than remove his cowboy hat.

Apparently, the episode began with 21-year-old Keven Beard summoned to a Fort Worth courtroom as a prospective juror. When the judge ordered him to remove his large black Stetson, Keven replied, "I don't take off my hat for no one, but my momma," and was promptly given 10 days for contempt of court.

Now granted, Keven's gesture may not be quite destined to go down in history alongside the other great sacrifices that brave men have made in the cause of personal integrity.

St. Thomas More, for instance, faced a roughly similar choice when Henry VIII ordered him to sanction his divorce or lose his hat. But the stakes for Tom were just slightly higher, considering that his head was to be inside the hat when it came off.

Still, there is an undeniable nobility in the stand of young Keven Beard.

To begin with, you have to be moved by a young man who refuses to take off his hat for anyone but his momma - particularly for a momma who doesn't even know how to spell "Keven." Such reverence for one's mother is tragically uncommon in these troubled times.

Moreover, you have to admire some-

one who would accept a jail-term rather than sacrifice any sort of personal principle.

(Keven's fiancée, Merri-Mari Galland, is quoted as saying that he has a bit of a stubborn streak, but is "really a good ol' boy." And we cannot doubt this for an instant - what else would you call a man who has a fiancée named Merri-Mari? On this evidence alone, we can safely assume that Keven has a brother named Billy-Bob, a hound named Blue and season tickets to the Mud Race and Tractor Pull.)

But most of all, you have to admire a man who would face jail rather than part with a cowboy hat.

There are, perhaps, people who will not instantly grasp the deep significance of a man's attachment to his Stetson. This is possibly because the world is full of people who would not be caught dead wearing one.

But I speak as one who has worn a cowboy hat - and, therefore, as one who appreciates what the Stetson symbolizes.

A Stetson symbolizes rugged masculinity tempered with compassion. It represents respect for momma, and square-shootin' and straight-talkin'. It represents, in short, the traditional manly Western ideal.

This is why, when people see someone like me wearing a cowboy hat, they immediately exclaim: "Look at the goof-ball who's trying to pretend he's a cowboy."

Which explains why I no longer wear a Stetson. At present, you'd have to classify me as a sort of closet hat-wearer - someone who longs to go public with his hat-orientation, but who lacks the courage of a Keven. Or a Svend.

But I digress. We were discussing the splendid gesture of a man whose deepest values are so fully symbolized by his Stetson that he would go to jail rather than doff it.

Staff Comment



By BRIAN MACLEOD

Walking the picket lines is never any fun.

I've done it myself, albeit for only two days, during a strike at Northern Telecom in Bramalea when I was a summer student there several years ago.

When you first arrive for picket duty there is a certain amount of excitement, followed by a long period of waiting. The novelty wears off after about an hour.

Then, you want to throw down your placard and go back to work.

Here in Georgetown, we've got almost 420 people walking the picket lines at two companies.

Smith and Stone employees walked out March 6 and Standard Products walked out just one week later.

The strikes are the second and third in Georgetown in recent months. Curwood Packaging endured a six-week strike before they managed to settle with the Graphics International Union.

The Canadian Auto Workers Union represents all 420 workers currently operating the picket lines.

I can't imagine having to go for any length of time earning the \$100 a week strike pay the union workers get for their stints on the picket line. I'd go broke in a day.

It's amazing they manage to hold out as long as they do. On the companies' side, they've got to be hurting too. Good business relationships are crucial to a company's reputation and the decreasing production during a strike can't help any.

But the one thing that seems to be common in most strikes is a distinct lack of communication.

If you look back to the post office strike last summer, when the news hit the papers the strike was settled, the workers here hadn't heard anything from their union or the company.

They only knew what was in the papers. But that's the way our labor system seems to work.

Both sides talk, both sides disagree. The union walks out and then everybody just sits with their arms folded over their chest and waits.

It's a funny way to do things. All that money on both sides down the drain and people just wait.

Of course you always need a cooling off period after negotiations break down, but how long does that have to last?

Some strikes benefit from a government appointed mediator. But even a mediator can only do so much if each side tells him "we're not moving till they do."

It seems to be the you first syndrome. I wonder what would happen if the government took a tougher stance - like locking the chief negotiators together in a padded room with only pizza and beer for nourishment until they work out a deal.

I bet they'd settle up once the bottles were empty and the pizza turned cold.

Our financial wizards down at Halton Region have a nice feather in their cap. They picked up a "distinguished budget presentation" award from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada.

Their presentations are judged on the actual document, the operations guide, the financial plan and how the budget is communicated to those who need to read it.

Since 1984 only 200 government institutions throughout North America have won the award.

All this and a tax hike within the rate of inflation too.

Berry's World



"Instead of going ahead with the Stealth bomber, why don't we use the money to buy Nicaragua?"