

# the HERALD Outlook

## Nothing but nonsense

### Ottawa

Stewart MacLeod  
Thomson News Service

What makes it so difficult to do, or say, anything critical about the Meech Lake accord is this nonsense about opponents somehow being anti-Quebec.

Then there is this other nonsense about the accord having to be implemented as drafted; that it can't be altered without the whole package coming unravelling.

Sure, it would be inconvenient for some if changes were made - Parliament and eight of the 10 legislatures have already approved the document - but that's certainly not an insurmountable problem. If the accord were improved by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the premiers, to satisfy the main concerns being expressed, it wouldn't take long for all the legislators to give it a stamp of approval.

As for the present accord unravelling during a reopening of negotiations, that's merely a scare tactic by the more strident proponents, notably Mr. Mulroney and Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa.

There is no reason whatever for the present accord, as approved by nine legislative bodies, to disintegrate during talks about its improvement. The worst that could happen is that the first ministers couldn't agree on changes.

And that's where things are right now. Do we really expect some premier to stand up following failed negotiations and announce that "because we couldn't agree on changes, my government will introduce legislation to unravel the accord already approved."

#### HARD SELL

The trouble with a hard sell - and let's face it, Meech Lake has been a hard sell - is that it must work. Failure to make the sale under these conditions invariably results in very determined rejections.

One suspects that New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna, whose arms have been twisted in all directions by backers of

Meech Lake, is more determined than ever to get the changes he wants. No politician wants to be seen bowing to pressure.

To some extent, this may also be true for Manitoba Premier Gary Filmon - although his immediate problem is within his own legislature where the Liberals and NDP oppose the accord and outnumber his Tories.

Had the arguments both for and against Meech Lake been kept in better perspective from the beginning, we wouldn't be having these present difficulties in completing the project.

But the participating first ministers, who cobbled together the accord in an all-night bargaining session, did overindulge themselves in self-congratulations about being latter-day fathers of Confederation. And opponents of the accord, or even those with serious questions about it, were made to feel almost unpatriotic.

Mr. Bourassa, who needs some up-to-date issue for his forthcoming election campaign, is busy telling everyone that opponents of Meech Lake somehow don't know Quebec. "I am a bit surprised at the opposition of certain leaders of English Canada. I would have thought they had a clearer and more profound understanding of the political situation in Quebec."

#### LITTLE WONDER

Well, if there are some misunderstandings in parts of Canada, it's not surprising. From the beginning of negotiations, we have been told that, by far, the over-riding objective is to "bring Quebec into the Constitution."

Even if the accord has flaws - something few proponents openly admit - it would be worth the price, we were informed. How many times have we been told that, without Quebec in the constitutional family, the country can't stick together? Over and over, we have been warned that a rejection of the accord would be interpreted as a rejection of Quebec, giving rise to a renewed outburst of separatism.

Seldom has anyone stopped to remind us that Quebec is already in the Constitution. True, the separatist Quebec government of the day didn't agree with the 1982 Constitution Act, but did anyone expect such agreement? There was no requirement for unanimity.

If Mr. Bourassa feels he is somehow outside the Constitution, it was passing strange he made full use of it to invoke its "notwithstanding clause" to restrict the use of English on outdoor signs. If that didn't establish some kind of constitutional precedent, I don't know what does.

And when opponents talk about the need to protect the rights of women, natives and minority-language groups outside Quebec, or Senate reform, or the creation of new provinces, these issues have nothing to do with a particular province.

Yet, as part of the hard sell, these have all been lumped in with Quebec's membership in the Constitution.

Know what else is strange? When the first ministers went to Meech Lake to reopen the Constitution, no one harbored the slightest fear that it would result in any unravelling. But now, in a manner of speaking, not even the reopening can be reopened.

There's just been too much rhetoric.

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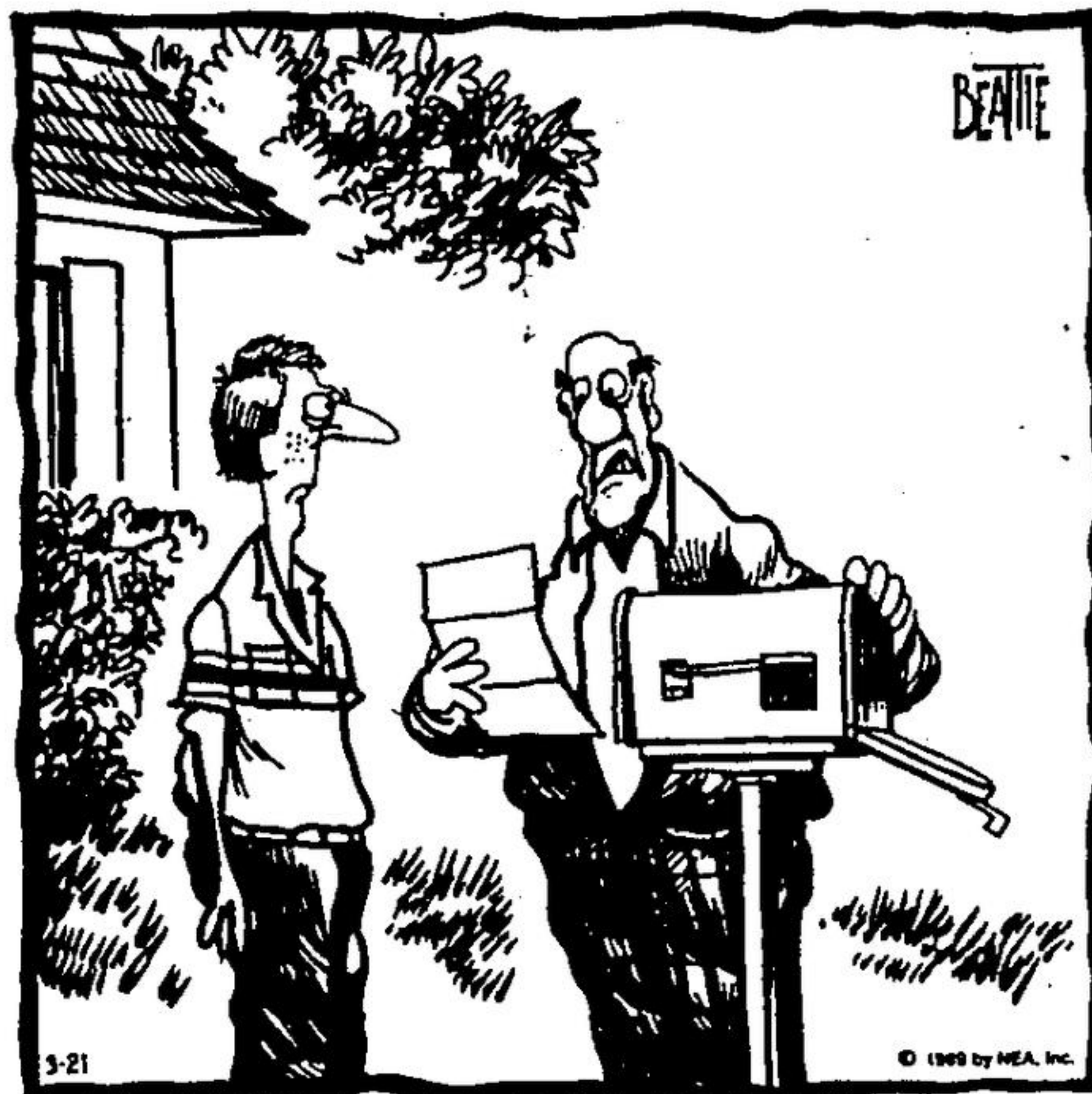
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"I guess you've been accepted to college. They've sent a pamphlet on home refinancing."

## No intervention likely



Your  
Business  
Diane Maley

Thomson News Service

We had been growing used to the idea that the federal government did not want industrial companies to have big financial service arms when Bell Canada came along and bought Montreal Trust.

BCE Inc., the holding company that owns Ma Bell, has agreed to pay \$875 million for the trust company. Montreal Trust is controlled by Power Financial Corp., another corporate giant. BCE is the biggest corporate conglomerate in the country, bigger even than Canadian Pacific.

Despite the bold move, no one seriously expects the federal government to intervene. Ottawa's tough talk about keeping lenders and borrowers separate has come to nothing, says Donald Blenkarn, former chairman of the House of Commons finance committee.

Ottawa had been talking about limiting the holdings of commercial and industrial companies in financial-service companies to 10 per cent.

A string of bank and trust company failures over the past few years has sparked public interest in two own companies that take deposits from the public. But as some observers point out, it is impossible to legislate ethical standards. Letting ownership fall where it may while keeping a close eye on intercorporate transactions seems to be the best way to protect the public.

#### BARRIERS CRUMBLE

The finance department's reversal is a dramatic turn of events. Not long ago, federal officials were talking about forcing companies that had trust company subsidiaries to reduce their holdings.

The House finance committee hauled executives of major companies up before a hearing to grill them about possible self-dealing and conflicts of interest.

All in all, it was an embarrassing display of political power wrongly used: politicians were intent on punishing companies for what they might someday do, although they had done nothing wrong in the past.

But has Ottawa really been converted? Montreal Trust is based in Montreal. Unlike Ottawa, Quebec likes the idea of industrial and financial-service companies joining hands. Montreal Trust plans to convert its federal charter to a Quebec one - it will no longer come under Ottawa's scrutiny.

Whether the deal is a test of federal policy is not entirely clear. Observers say the key measure in winning federal approval in future will be its.

#### CONCERNS PERSIST

It would be wrong to say the critics' fears about conflict of interest are groundless. We have seen too many examples of self-dealing by small trust companies, where the owners encouraged them to lend big mortgages to a real estate affiliate, for example. When the real estate market slumped, the development arm dragged the trust company down with it.

This is not likely to happen with a company as financially sound as BCE. But there are other concerns.

The holding-company parent could discourage its financial subsidiary from making loans to a competitor, bringing its financial muscle to bear on the marketplace. Companies wanting to borrow money could end up with fewer places to shop.

Pushing these considerations aside, the appeal of Montreal Trust to BCE is undeniable. BCE has 350,000 shareholders and 100,000 employees, many of whom could use mortgages, loans or other products offered by Montreal Trust. Who knows? We may start getting Montreal Trust advertisements with our phone bills.

## Arnie's Army

Staff  
Comment

Brian MacLeod

Over 2,600 of us crowded together in Veterans Memorial Auditorium shouting, cheering, calling for more, giving appreciative applause where it was deserved. There was a rush to the front and a strobe effect dominated the stage as camera flashes went off everywhere.

What was it? The Arnold Schwarzenegger Classic and Ms. International bodybuilding contests in Columbus, Ohio.

Being a fan of the sport I journeyed for eight hours last weekend to take in the day-long event, and a seminar starring the most famous names in bodybuilding on Sunday.

The event featured a chance to pose with bodybuilding's leading man, Arnold Schwarzenegger, for a polaroid and an opportunity to make small talk with the owner of the world's most famous biceps for about 3½ seconds. (No, we couldn't ask him about Maria).

Arnold walked back and forth between two screens for three hours non-stop, just so adoring fans could bring that polaroid home for a keepsake. He's not as imposing as one might expect. Arnold is still in good form, as his shirt-tearing biceps-flexing scene in Twins showed, but he wasn't as awe-inspiring as some might expect.

However, in the bodybuilding world, Arnold isn't just the leading man, he's an icon. At the mere mention of his name 2,600 people went crazy, cheering and yelling throughout the night.

The contest itself was a spectacular event. The Las Vegas-style show featured the world's best male and female bodybuilders. We were also treated to appearances by five-time Mr. Olympia Lee Haney (fully dressed of course), five-time Ms. Olympia Corey Everson and of course Arnold's famous cousins, Hanz and Franz.

One thing's for sure, I have a whole new appreciation for female bodybuilders. Although it's the "big boys" like Gary Strydom, Rich Gaspari and Robby Robinson who draw most of the attention, female bodybuilders have learned how to pose in such a way that it's actually an eye-catching dance routine.

Arnold kicked off the seminar the following day. It's easy to see how he's made the transition from the stage to the screen. The crowd was hanging on his every word, and the one liners for which he has become famous, were abounding.

One thing's for certain. You didn't have to be a bodybuilding fan to enjoy the show. It was a sell out. And after that much cheering and shouting, no one could come out of there without the adrenalin flowing.

To those of us in the bodybuilding fraternity, the show merely strengthened our resolve. To those members of the general public who were seeking to satisfy their curiosity, it was, no doubt, an education.

Oh yes, Rich Gaspari and Tonya Knight took top honors.

### Berry's World



"Oh, NO! Not quality time AGAIN!"