

# the HERALD

Home Newspaper of Halton Hills - Established 1866

A Division of Canadian Newspapers Company Limited  
45 Guelph Street, Georgetown L7G 3Z6, Ontario

DAVID A. BEATTIE, Publisher  
and General Manager

BRIAN MacLEOD  
Editor

DAN TAYLOR  
Advertising Manager

Phone 877-2201

Second Class Mail - Registered Number 8943

Page 6 - THE HERALD, Wednesday, June 28, 1989

## Editorial

### Take a hard look at a big raise

As taxpayers in Halton Hills, you'll soon get a good look at the stuff of which your local councillors are made.

Our local politicians must decide what to do with a report from a five-member citizens committee containing recommendations for a \$10,000 raise for the mayor's position and a \$1,000 raise for the town's 12 councillors.

The report also recommends a \$400 monthly car allowance for the mayor and a \$150 a month car allowance for councillors.

The citizens committee, which consists of chairman Ross Knechtel, Jo Lister, Hartley Coles, Bob Malcolmson and Fred Harrison, says the increase could be spread over three years.

Currently, Mayor Russ Miller makes \$20,400 a year plus an extra \$16,000 as a Regional councillor. Halton Hills' four Regional councillors are paid \$8,000 by the town and \$16,000 by Halton Region.

The remaining eight town councillors are paid \$8,000 each by taxpayers in the Town of Halton Hills.

The mayor of Milton - a town in Halton Region comparable in size to Halton Hills - makes \$26,000 a year plus the Regional salary and Milton town councillors are paid \$8,773 annually.

All this spawned from a Halton Hills staff report last year which showed salaries of the mayor and councillors here are lagging behind other municipalities. At the time, several councillors jumped to their feet, adamant they weren't doing the job for the "token" payment. They believed that the mayor's position should be given an increase in salary but that councillors' salaries should be kept in check.

At Monday's meeting, there was no such immediate backlash. Only one councillor, Lil Bowman, queried Mr. Knechtel - himself a former councillor - about the background of the report.

With a budget increase in double figures this year, we'd expect the town to exercise restraint.

It must be stressed that personalities should be divorced from payment where councillors are concerned. No one can deny that Russ Miller is a hard working and diligent mayor, but he will not be mayor of Halton Hills forever. The salaries must be representative of the position and not the people filling them.

We cannot begrudge councillors giving themselves a raise to keep up with surrounding municipalities. Instead of forming this public committee as an attempt to legitimize a raise in salaries, councillors could have - should have - tackled the issue a year ago and explained their actions to the public.

If their reasoning made sense, the public wouldn't have grumbled. It's often said politicians are elected to make tough decisions. This is one decision they should have made without tossing it out to the public first.

And the composition of the committee, which includes Georgetown Independent Managing Editor Hartley Coles, has put councillor Ann Currie in a terribly awkward position. Although Coun. Currie has retired from the Independent, she worked there for well over a decade and still does part-time work for the newspaper. She has been put in a position in which her former immediate supervisor is recommending a salary increase with public funds.

It's incumbent on Coun. Currie that she declare a conflict of interest and refrain from voting or speaking on the issue.

## Premier's vision of Canada lies only in southern Ontario



### Queen's Park

Derek Nelson  
Thomson News Service

TORONTO-Premier David Peterson made a revealing slip here this week as he was being interviewed ("scrummed," as they say) by reporters.

He was being asked about the just-announced joint Ontario-Quebec feasibility study on high-speed rail transport in the Quebec City to Windsor corridor.

Among other points that he made, he said such upgrading would be important for national unity, for linking the country together.

One sharp-eyed reporter quickly asked what was in this symbol of "national unity" for western and Atlantic Canada?

Peterson immediately realized he'd made the classic central Canadian faux pas of defining the country as southern Ontario and Quebec - with a spur line to Ottawa - and mumbled some generalities in response.

In fact, though, what he first said was what he thought.

And it is more than that the country's industrial heartland lies along the axis. It is also the road to Quebec francophonie by which Peterson and his ilk define the country.

It isn't really a partisan thing. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's

federal Tories think much the same, as did the former Ontario Conservative government of Bill Davis. And former Liberal prime minister Pierre Trudeau almost copyrighted Canada on those grounds.

But there is a difference nowadays.

Peterson is worried about the future. He admired a couple of (in his words) "insightful articles" by Jeffrey Simpson in the Globe and Mail recently that described how the vision of a dual English-French, bilingual Canada is dying.

"Canada, as we know it, cannot exist without a desire by English- and French-speaking Canadians to do great things. Never in my lifetime has that sense been weaker," Simpson wrote.

Peterson, who'd just returned from being feted in Quebec City by Premier Robert Bourassa, spoke of an "air of resignation" in Simpson's pieces about the future of Canada and of how he wanted to fight that pessimism.

Peterson continues to insist one way to do so is by ratifying the Meech Lake accord (with its definition of Quebec as a "distinct society"), a document he calls pro-Canada. It needs support, at least partly, because inside Quebec "it has assumed a very great symbolism... synonymous with rejection or humiliation if it is turned down."

#### SAME OLD LINE

In short, it was Peterson peddling the old line that so mesmerized non-French Canada two decades

ago: Give Quebec what it wants - or see it leave.

The short reply nowadays is, as Simpson implies: Who cares?

The Peterson "vision" of Canada is yesterday's vision. It is an abstract view of a Canada that never was or will be.

It is a "vision" that runs only across southern Ontario; it is bilingual even as Quebec marches further into unilingualism; it is centralist even as Quebec becomes semi-independent.

It is a "vision" that has long infuriated many in western Canada, and is today losing (as Simpson notes) most of its appeal in its former heartland, Ontario.

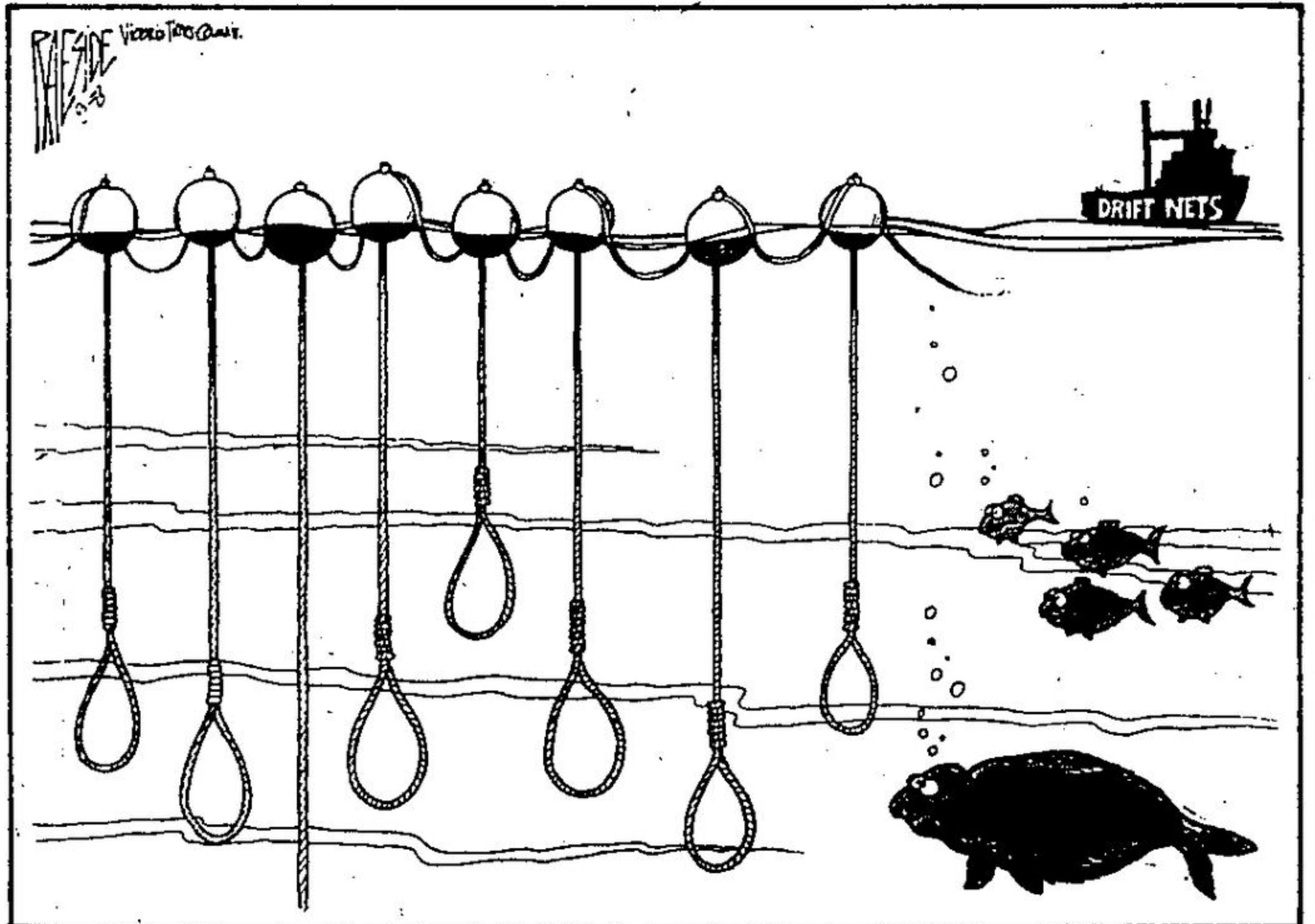
By coincidence, the reply to Peterson's "vision" was given by Publisher Link Byfield in a recent issue of the newsmagazine Western Report:

"Quebec has already told Anglo-Canada to stay out of its affairs. It wants an arm's-length relationship. And yet, it also wants a lot more money from Ottawa than it sends back in taxes, and it wants to go right on electing one-quarter of the MPs in the House of Commons.

"If 'losing' Quebec means losing the stupendous privilege of paying for all this, most westerners should eventually agree that we should 'lose' Quebec as fast as possible.

"It can be as 'distinct' as it likes, but it can do so from the National Assembly in Quebec City, and it can stop sending Anglo-Canada the bill," he wrote.

Including the bill for a central Canadian train set.



## Alberta works for senate reform

By RENNIE MacKENZIE  
Ottawa Bureau  
Thomson News Service

OTTAWA-Without any encouragement from the federal administration, the Alberta government continues to lurch forward with its own daring attempt to reform the country's appointed Senate.

Cynical observers of the province's determined effort to elect its first senator as early as this fall might view the first few clumsy steps in the process as another amusing sideshow in the never-ending theatre of federal and provincial politics.

But the unilateral decision of Premier Don Getty to push a Senate election bill through the province's legislature has excited Albertans who feel and elected senator would give the appointed "upper house" some legitimacy.

The Alberta idea of a Senate election followed the 1987 Meech Lake accord and the federal offer to select senators from among names recommended by provincial governments. Getty seized the

opportunity and declared that Alberta would elect its candidate to fill a vacant Senate seat.

But the appointment of a senatorial candidate elected by popular choice was not quite what Prime Minister Brian Mulroney had in mind. He reminded Getty that the Meech Lake accord called for the provinces to submit a number of names and that the final selection would be made by the federal administration.

There was also the example of Gerald Ottenheimer, who became the first senator appointed under the Meech process. He had been recommended by Newfoundland's premier of the day, Brian Peckford.

Getty had no great problem with the prime minister's response. Mulroney could select his senator from among the top five finishers in the Alberta election, he said.

In Ottawa, some politicians are pressing the government to accept the Alberta process. Edmonton Tory MP Scott Thorkelson has urged the prime minister to accept "the people's recommendation"

and has proposed a caucus-sponsored conference on Senate reform.

Thorkelson, an active proponent of the Triple E - elected, equal and effective - Senate, said it is unlikely Mulroney will reject any candidates to come out of the Alberta election. He sees the Alberta election as another step in the natural progression to a completely reformed Senate.

#### PROVINCIAL INTERESTS

"People in the West feel strongly about Senate reform," he said. "There is a need to have a Senate that represents provincial interests."

But while the Getty government has a firm objective and a clear means of establishing the process, it appears to be stumbling over the mechanics of implementing it.

Enabling legislation was introduced in the last session of the legislature but died when Getty called the last provincial election. The same legislation has been promised in the new session and there is still hope the Senate election can be held this fall.