

## Tax after death

Taxes are now more inevitable than death.

That absurd statement, borrowed from a satirist, has been brought to life by Finance Minister Michael Wilson's Goods and Services Tax, which includes of all things, funerals.

We admire Mr. Wilson's ultimate goal of reducing the deficit. But forcing people to spend less by introducing a sales tax which is expected to bring in an extra \$5.5 billion to government coffers, is a strange way of going about it.

Canadians want their government to be fiscally responsible, so they generally agree with the big push to reduce the deficit. But we watch new furniture appear in government offices while the furniture in the average Canadian's living room grows older.

Fortunately for those lower income families, pressure groups prohibited the government from taxing our groceries. The shame of it is, the government wants to do just that. Our leaders want a tax on the basic necessities of human life.

We're not sure if the government understands that there are still many Canadians out there who still have to worry about the price of milk.

So, instead, they've bypassed taxing the necessities of life and taxed us after we die.

How are you going to sell that one to us Mr. Wilson?

Meanwhile, our own MP, Garth Turner - whose battle cry during the federal election was "the middle class is under attack" - has refused to stand up and be counted. Now, it has been left up to his successor, the business editor at Mr. Turner's former newspaper, the Toronto Sun, to carry on the famous "coupon legend" which once propelled the MP into the limelight on our leaders' doorsteps.

Mr. Turner now says of the tax, "I'm not going to support it and I'm not going to oppose it."

To his credit, he has organized a series of "town hall" meetings to hear people in the riding of Halton-Peel speak.

Don't let this opportunity pass. Mr. Turner has consistently said he has the prime minister's ear during caucus meetings. Now is the time to put those caucus meetings to the test.

Sometimes "town hall" meetings serve to placate the public by letting people get things off their chest.

We hope it won't end there. We hope the government will listen and act.

## Caffeine fiend



Brian MacLeod  
Editor's Notebook

Uh, oh.

This is it. This is what I've been fearing. I got the information in the mail the other day and I've been biting my nails ever since. I'm going to have to quit - cold turkey. I can't just cut back to four a day. And what will I do with last year's Christmas present...

My enemy, I'm told by a pharmacist writer, is caffeine.

So that's it. All those sleepless nights, that dull pain in the forehead, these snappy answers to my co-workers, it's not because I've been intensely pondering headlines or front page stories. It's because of my best friend - the coffee maker.

Caffeine, according to the Shoppers Drug Mart prepared information sheet, is the most popular non-prescription stimulant used today.

The pharmacist says caffeine can improve short-term mental alertness, (hurray). However, she goes on to say it's no substitute for a good night's sleep because all it does is make you ignore your tiredness, heck she says it can't even sober you up. Now I always suspected caffeine couldn't make up for lack of sleep but I didn't really want to know it. All these years - beginning with my university days when I'd easily put away 14 cups of the liquid gold during all-night essays. I've been relying on coffee, thoroughly convincing myself that a constantly filled cup can add an extra 10 hours to my working day.

Each morning now I arrive at the Herald to an already freshly brewed pot of 10 cups of coffee with the aroma drawing me towards the coffee maker beside my desk.

But what now... Is it possible... shudder the thought... that I'll reach for the decaffeinated...

## War on drugs isn't Black or white

Derek Nelson

Queen's Park  
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The appointment of a cabinet-level, provincial anti-drug boss was probably a political inevitability.

Whether it will prove anything more than window-dressing is another matter.

And that's not for want of either sincerity or effort, mind you.

The man who got the job, Muskoka MPP Ken Black, has been Premier David Peterson's special advisor on drug abuse since last October.

Moreover, he authored a rather common sense report last year on dope use.

He's likely as good an appointment to the post as could be made.

But what we're dealing with when it comes to drugs is something that cabinet posts aren't going to solve. And Black knows it, of course.

It is true Premier Peterson's question to reporters remains pertinent. "How do you face emerging problems..."

He noted that for drugs, the answer isn't just reposed in the "corrections ministry or the solicitor general or in education or

health; it's all of those things.

"And how do you organize an efficient approach to a comprehensive attack on these problems..."

One way to co-ordinate any cross-ministry issue like drugs, and make it high profile simultaneously, is to give it a cabinet minister with responsibility in the area without actually creating a ministry.

That's what was done with what is known as women's issues, for example, as well as for other "issue" categories such as native affairs, francophone affairs, race relations, the disabled and senior citizens.

But, except for race relations, those are targeted to specific client groups.

The difficulty with drugs, like race relations, is that it is everywhere.

The throne speech raised the subject of drugs within the context of "maintaining a sense of safety and security in our communities is critical to our province's well-being and development."

Anti-drug education has been stepped up in the schools and community-based programs enhanced in what are euphemistically called "high-risk neighborhoods."

### PROMISED

Stronger police drug enforcement has been promised, as has a wider range of treatment programs, including employee-assistance programs.

And now we've got Black's appointment and the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee that includes eight other ministers whose responsibilities touch on drugs one way or another.

Almost all discussion of drugs

tilts either one way or another: either towards harsher laws and harsher enforcement of laws, or towards more and better treatment facilities.

Sometimes, as in the throne speech, a government will emphasize both approaches, although invariably it will eventually put more emphasis on one than the other.

But the core problem will remain.

People take drugs because they want to take drugs. And even if they don't inform on their friends who do.

Moreover, the profits are so huge that greed alone will guarantee a steady supply to feed what amounts to an insatiable demand.

There are solutions that have been advanced, but they require major social adjustments of a nature that no politician is likely to touch.

For example, there is legalization along the lines of how liquor is controlled, through Liquor Control Board stores.

That, at the very least, would destroy the criminal chain of activity that has webbed its way through every facet of society today.

Alternatively, there could be periodic random drug sampling at every job in the county (the RIDE program carried into the office), with community service, fines and public embarrassment as penalties for being caught indulging.

Yet, the key deterrent to drug use remains getting its consumption frowned upon with the same kind of fervor now reserved for cigarette smoking.

Good luck, Ken.

## CANADIANS REACT TO WILSON'S TAX GRAB



## Each MP costs us \$700,000



Rennie MacKenzie  
Ottawa  
Thomson News Service

The cost of keeping your MP on the job in Ottawa will break the \$700,000 barrier this year.

To be precise, the cost of delivering all direct services, offices and staff that Members of Parliament demand - along with their own salaries and perks - will total \$207.1 million this year. That's \$702,033.89 for each of the 295 MPs.

At the rate this spending is increasing - 8.7 per cent over last year - you will be sending million-dollar men and women to Ottawa within five years. That will be very soon after the next general election.

The cost of operating the Commons and maintaining its members doesn't include extra costs run up by the prime minister's office, the privy council office, cabinet ministers and their limos and chauffeurs, their second offices and added staff. All that is charged against departmental budgets.

Much attention is paid each year to salaries and perks MPs bestow on themselves and the few remunerative morsels they toss down the hall to cut the grumbling in the Senate. Senators have always resented the fact they receive less for occupying a loftier position in Parliament's pecking order.

Soon after MPs return to parliamentary duty Sept. 25, we can expect to hear more on that subject when a review of salaries and allowances paid to MPs and Senators is tabled in the Commons. Former MPs Francis Fox and Gerry St. Germain have been reviewing the salary schedules since February and are putting final touches to the study. It should be in the hands of Deputy Prime

Minister Don Mazankowski sometime this month.

For their efforts, Fox and St. Germain have been pocketing between \$350 and \$450 for each day they spend on the review.

Backbench MPs are now collecting about \$80,000 in basic annual salary and tax-free allowances, almost double what they made in 1980. The salaries rise with position and responsibility up to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's level of \$153,400.

But the salaries and allowances claim only a portion of the total outlay in the Commons. Each MP is provided with a six-figure operating budget to cover salaries for secretarial, research and support staff and whatever contract help is required, and for some other commercial services.

Other allowances and supplements are available to provide for additional constituency offices and furniture and for travel in remote and distant ridings.

Outside the basic three-room, high-tech, furnished Parliament Hill office, the expenses really begin to mount.