

Editorial

No guns!

Here we go again.

Hunting may become a contentious issue once more in Halton but this time it won't be deer - it'll be geese that may be dying at the blast of a hunter's gun.

Oakville councillors are setting up a committee to consider how to control the Canada Goose population. They want a councillor from Halton Hills to sit on the committee.

The committee is considering either "harvesting" the geese or "addling" their eggs.

It's funny how people can come up with terms like "harvest" or "addling" when they don't really want to say what they mean. And what they mean is blasting the geese out of the sky or shaking up their eggs so they never hatch.

It's refreshing to see at least one local councillor, Norm Elliott, stand up and say these terms are "nothing more than a euphemism for the hunt of Canadian Geese."

The problem is that the waterfowl population in the Region's waterways are polluting them with excrement.

The new beach, behind the boathouse at Acton's Prospect Park, was closed for 40 per cent of the summer this year because excrement had been stirred up from the bottom of the lake.

But signs were also posted at the old beach, a favorite swimming hole for Acton residents, for 15 days this year warning of the potential dangers of swimming in the contaminated water.

The waterfowl are attracted to the lake by people who feed them, Coun. Elliott admits.

But it seems that every time nature and humans clash, our answer is to dig the guns out of the basement.

We're pleased to see our councillors didn't agree to sit on the committee at the beck and call of councillors from Oakville.

Instead, they want to wait for an expected 60-page report on the state of Acton's Fairy Lake, due out in a few weeks.

We hope those councillors who expressed their dismay at the idea of killing the geese on Monday will stick to their guns down the road and prevent such a slaughter.

There are other ways to lure geese away from the lake, such as prohibiting feeding them.

It may take a little longer, but it would certainly be an easier solution to live with.

A taxing report



Brian MacLeod
Editor's Notebook

Halton Peel MP Garth Turner's tax committee has made its recommendations public and Finance Minister Michael Wilson won't be a happy man if he has to implement them. The committee, which toured the riding asking for public input, said the federal government should lower the proposed nine per cent Goods and Services Tax to seven per cent. To cover the loss in revenue, the government should eliminate exemptions for brokerage fees and insurance, committee chairman Colin McKinnon says.

You'll notice the distinct lack of advice to tax groceries. The tax committee has been told that taxing financial services can be extremely complicated and next to impossible to manage, yet it has chosen to advocate taxing certain financial services rather than implement a tax on food.

Sounds like the tax committee has been doing a little political tip-toeing itself.

The tax committee also recommends the government devise a "financial plan" which would tie future income from the GST to paying off the deficit. A move one tax committee member said during a meeting in Georgetown that almost brought "tar and feathers" from Michael Wilson when he suggested it to him.

Secretary of State Tom Hockin will be in Acton Friday night and Saturday to mingle with the public. At 11 a.m. he and Mr. Turner will discuss federal policies in the downstairs parlor of Trinity United Church on Mill Street in Acton.

Three groups oppose Meech Lake

Rave reviews from establishment politicians and media greeted NDP Leader Bob Rae's eloquent appeal here last week for the Meech Lake accord.

What he said bears repeating, and what he didn't say requires a question or two.

Rae, like Premier David Peterson and Progressive Conservative Leader Andy Brandt, favors Meech Lake, as, without question, does a majority of the legislature. But there are dissenters in all three parties, although they keep their voices muted most of the time.

Rae characterized opposition to Meech Lake as coming in three categories.

One was "anti-French and anti-Quebec. It stems from a sense that has always existed in parts of our country that have never appreciated the French fact, that have never accepted the existence and rights of the French language and that have never accepted that Quebec is a province in which the French language is going to be predominant."

"I have no idea how wide, broad or deep that undercurrent of sentiment is. Anybody in public life encounters prejudice and bigotry every day..."

What Rae is talking about are people who believe that the Canada that existed from 1867 to 1967 (that is, Canada prior to the Official Languages Act of 1968) was a

Canada that was doing fine.

It was a Canada where the English language was the language of the country, although French was important in Quebec and present at the federal level.

Typically, Rae thinks people who, for 100 years, favored that vision of Canada are bigots.

The Canada since then has seen the suppression of English in Quebec by Bill 101 (and this was ruled legitimate by the Supreme Court in the Singer case), and the extension of French throughout both federal and provincial institutions elsewhere in Canada.

The second group opposing Meech Lake includes those who implemented the changes of 1968 and have attempted to make Canada into a bilingual country with a strong federal government. Their foremost spokesman, of course, is Pierre Trudeau.

SURRENDER

To them, Meech Lake is a Munich-like surrender of federal powers (especially on implementing genuine "national" programs) to greedy premiers.

Rae, while disagreeing, unfortunately declines to deal with the two great flaws in the argument of the Trudeau centralizers, commenting only that their views were out there as a "fundamental intellectual case against the accord."

The first of the flaws was Trudeau Ottawa's refusal to put

the brakes on, Quebec's suppression of English during his years in power through such devices as the disallowance clause (which could have thrown out Bill 101). Genuine bilingualism would have defended English in Quebec with the same intensity as Ottawa promoted French elsewhere.

The second was the failure of the centralizers - to this day - to accept that Canada has evolved into 10 distinct societies, not just one with the other nine lumped together. If Rae is willing to accept a looser confederation, then it must be so for all 10 provinces. (This, incidentally, is why people like myself favor Meech Lake but see it as only an interim step.)

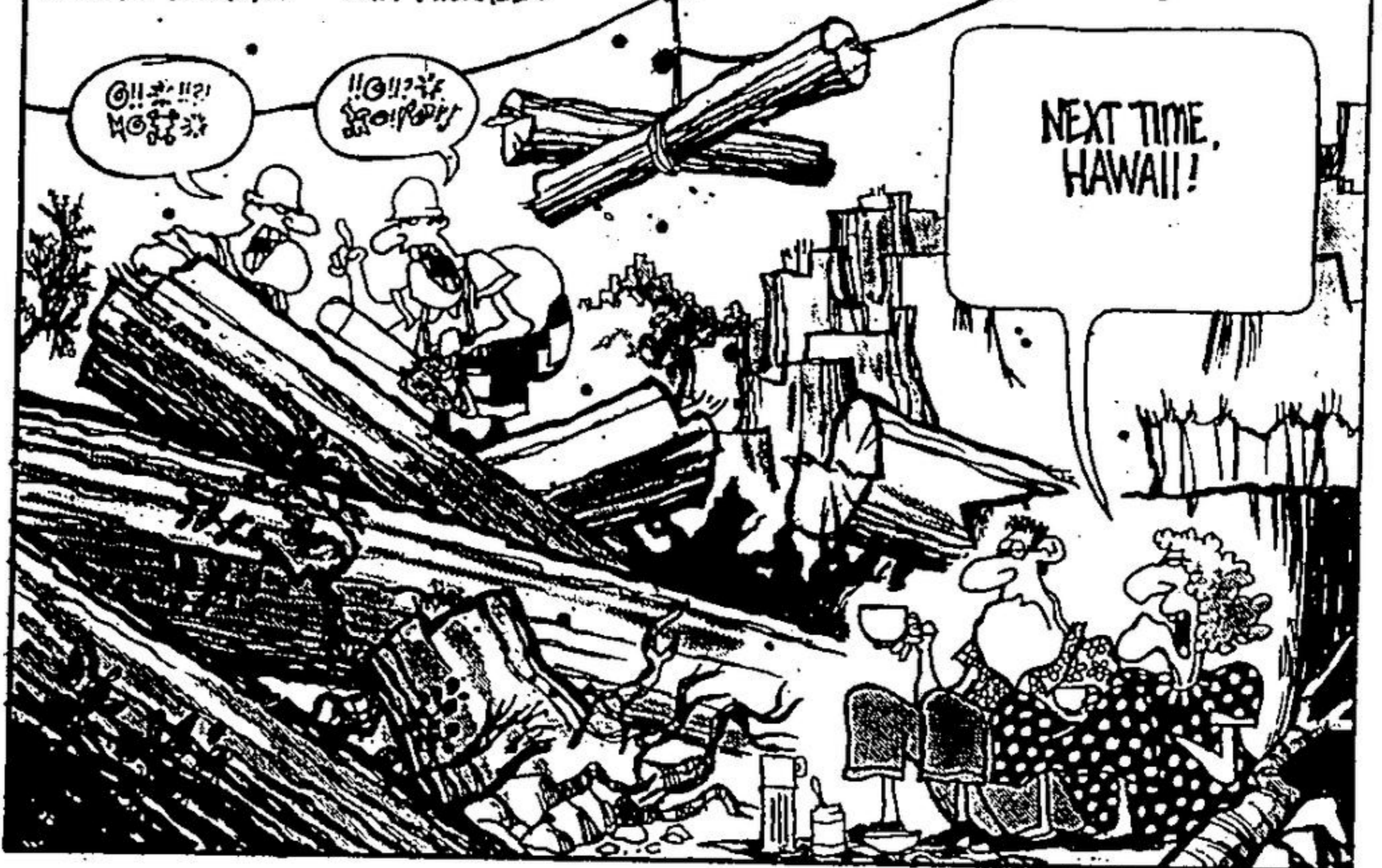
The third group to reject Meech Lake includes all those special interests who want the accord to go further than it actually does and give them enhanced powers, too: multiculturalists, feminists, aboriginal politicians and so on.

Rae did not see any restraints in Meech Lake to prevent "saying yes to Quebec... without saying no to native people... without saying no to other concerns."

Without Meech Lake, Rae believes the country's life itself is threatened "if we fail to define the relationship between all of us in this country."

That's fair enough. But what we really need is a constitutional convention to deal with it, not a backroom deal by the establishment.

NEWS ITEM: CLEAR-CUT LOGGING SITES COULD ATTRACT TOURISTS. - CLIFF MICHAEL.



Our legacy won't be rich

than we have enjoyed unless current trends are reversed.

One of those trends, which became the theme of most news reports, was growth in the national debt, fuelled by current interest rates. The council said the federal government has slipped into "a danger zone of debt" because the rates (12.5 per cent) are much higher than nominal economic growth (eight per cent when real growth and inflation are added).

This could lead to an explosion in debt, the council warned, with future burdens greater because Ottawa is offering high interest rates now to finance past obligations.

DEAF EAR

The council suggests solutions, including a spending freeze and lower interest rates, but these choices have not yet caught the ear of Ottawa's decision-makers.

But there was another sombre sidelight raised in the review that could have severe social repercussions.

The council found that in the last two decades, there has been a shrinkage in the proportion of employees who are considered middle income, and (split virtually equally) an increase in the ratio of both low- and high-income workers. In 1967, about 27 per cent of workers were middle income. In 1986, this group was 21.5 per cent.

"After adjusting for inflation, the members of an average young family under age 25 in 1987 could expect a real income that was 14-per-cent lower than that of a similar family a decade earlier," the review says. "By contrast, a young family who started out in 1967 could have expected a real-income gain of 33 per cent over the next 10 years."

These numbers suggest a worrisome widening gap between the rich and the poor that needs to be addressed. In general, the poor are younger, located outside Central Canada, and work in low-paying, non-unionized, often part-time, service jobs - the fastest-growing employment sector.

The wealthy have well-paying, permanent jobs, with savings and vested pension plans that grow faster with high interest rates.

OTHER HURDLES

The poor may encounter other hurdles as they approach retirement. Between 1960 and 1986, the review says, the proportion of the labor force covered by private pension plans fell to 36.7 per cent from 39.6 per cent. The small firms and service industries, where increasing numbers of the poor tend to work, generally lack private pension plans.

It would be a shame to leave a legacy of increased poverty to the young.

Vic Parsons
Ottawa Bureau

Thomson News Service



One might have hoped that Canadians could have stepped over the threshold into the 1990s with a song in their hearts, optimistically challenging the future.

Sure, there are some trifles to cope with - increased taxes, high interest rates and prospects of recession - but these are necessary now to beat down the trail to prosperity, right?

Short-term pain for long-term gain, and all that.

Unfortunately, the few remaining optimists in the country, if there were any left outside Brian Mulroney's cabinet, have been dealt a blow by the latest annual review of the Economic Council of Canada, a federal advisory agency.

The review, entitled Legacies, suggests that we will leave our children a leaner economic future