

Editors Notebook

The 'Good Ship Lollipop'

By COLIN GIBSON
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It certainly is reassuring to find out that Canada's 'ship of state' - referred to in some quarters as 'The Good Ship Lollipop' - is in such good hands.

How else do you explain the recent revelation that a House of Commons Committee has approved, in principle, a \$6,000-a-year increase in travel allowance for MP's meals, hotels and other expenses.

Once the proposal is given final approval (and who is going to bite the hand that feeds it), the proposal will represent an increase of almost 30 per cent in MP's expense allowances.

This would be added on to the \$20,600 MP's already get as a tax-free allowance and coupled with an MP's basic salary of \$62,100.

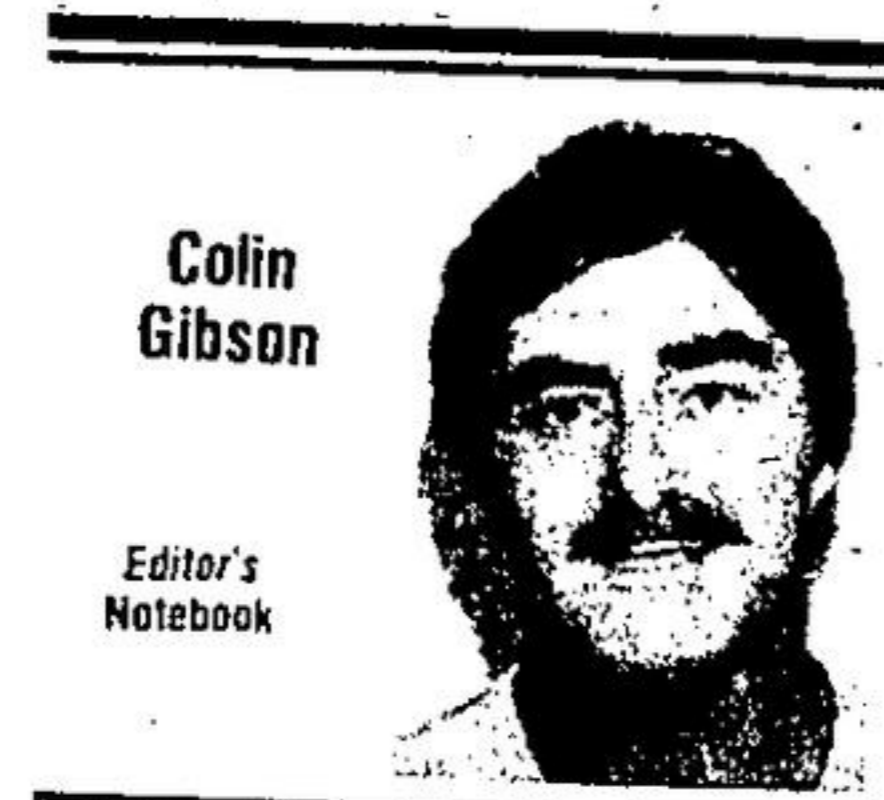
The ordinary tax-payer will once again be left holding the bag - empty of course.

Maybe these guys are suffering from an overdose of Saccharin.

New Democratic House Leader, Nelson Riis, was quick to defend the proposed allowance increase. Riis was quoted as saying the money will come from other cuts in Commons spending.

That's fine, Nelson, but the ordinary tax-payer is still the one footing the bill and when was the last time he got a tax break?

It also cost the public \$238 million in 1989 to fly cabinet ministers and bureaucrats hither



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and you spreading glad (?) tidings. This is up \$100 million from 1986. Nobody qualified for 'Frequent Flyer' coupons, I suppose.

But back to the New Democratic Party, the supposed champion of the common man.

The NDP doesn't want to rock the federal boat just now because it's making hay while rain pours down on Canada's parade.

Statistics from the chief electoral office show that NDP fundraisers raised \$13,864,694 from 82,290 Canadians, nation-wide, last year.

The Progressive Conservatives tapped 40,191 Canadians for \$13,801,368 while the Liberal party collected the paltry sum of \$6,324,012 from 19,970 Canadians.

To borrow from the country and western song, "Mama don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys."



Chretien wrong to lay low

OTTAWA - If these were normal times, one could readily understand the logic of Jean Chretien lying low for the summer, giving Canadians a chance to reflect on the country's difficulties, and then gradually building a full head of steam for the next federal election.

But these are not normal times, and the new Liberal leader can ill afford to stay out of the limelight. The limelight is in desperate search of a target.

It's not that Mr. Chretien had ever planned to lie on the beach all summer and do nothing. But, from everything we hear, his energies will be devoted largely to rebuilding the party organization, from the riding associations up to head office. Of course, he will take time off to campaign in two August byelections, one in Montreal's Laurier-St-Marie and the other in Oshawa.

But he has no immediate plans to seek a Commons seat himself, nor does he plan to plunge into the current constitutional mess. All along, the plan has been to maintain a relatively low profile, ensuring



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with the wait.

There is, right now, a desperate need for new leadership - at most levels.

BAD TASTE

The post-Meech depression has not only left a terrible aftertaste, it has removed the sheen from many of the political leaders who took part in that tortuous exercise. And no one has lost more sheen than Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

He not only instituted the whole business, he built it into a nation-making, or nation-destroying, option and, when it failed, he stood accused of manipulating other first ministers. The nasty post-Meech warfare of finger-pointing has raised the stature of absolutely no one.

Even the most sympathetic observers agree that the prime minister's voice lost moral authority, and credibility after the accord went down the drain. As Ottawa and Quebec prepare to go to the bilateral negotiating table, one

But the accord that divided the Liberal party is dead. What's divided now, and in danger of dividing even further, is Canada itself.

So far, a confused nation is not responding. Trouble is, no one knows how to respond.

An even bigger problem is, there's no one who seems capable of inspiring any response.

With Mr. Mulroney busy licking his wounds, with the Liberal opposition led in Parliament by a sincere but uninspiring Herb Gray, with the New Democrats rising to new levels of irrelevancy, it's time for a fresh appeal.

Mr. Chretien is in the best position to offer this, having just become leader of the traditional governing party. He doesn't have to offer comprehensive solutions - no one can at this stage - but as a probable future prime minister, he should be demonstrating some form of leadership. At least show us he's there.

During his 27 years in Parliament, the little fellow from Shawinigan always had a knack for making Canadians feel good about themselves. Lord knows, we could use a dash of that right now.

The new leader should grab the first opportunity to get into the Commons and show us his stuff. The country is more important than the next election.

Procedures must be followed for communities to survive

One shudders to think what might happen to some poor lost soul wandering innocently along Maple Avenue toting an axe or - horror of horrors - a chain saw.

He might be tarred and yellow-ribboned and run out of town on a log cabin.

An exaggeration, of course. But really too far-fetched, as the vitriole continues to mount between prospective developers in Halton Hills and citizens who want to have their community remain unchanged. Perhaps not.

To develop in Halton Hills, or not to develop in Halton Hills - and at what pace? That seems to be the issue at the centre of the debate. And as in most debates, pros and cons abound on both sides.

Halton Hills Town Council, and in turn, Mayor Russ Miller, are being pummelled by both sides and this is unfair.

Certain procedures have been in place for some time now concerning development in Halton Hills and they are being followed by Halton Hills Town Council.

Nothing underhanded or against the law has occurred and development proposals haven't even reached the public hearings stage as yet.

Yet proponents from both sides of the debate are already rising to the call of arms.

A bit premature, one might offer. The procedural system must be allowed to run its course without being detoured along the way. That's why we have procedures and elected officials must follow them as the 'voice of the people.'

The citizens of a community are the ones who decide, at election time, how they want their community to be governed at the present time and similarly, how the community will adjust to future needs.

A community's history, tradition and cultural heritage should be protected. It gives a community a sense of stability and a source of pride to be passed on to future generations.

That stated, however, the above-mentioned, as with other things, can also fall within the category, "In the eye of the beholder." This begs the question, 'Who makes the final decision?' in such a case.

Development is also important for the health and well-being of a community.

Housing has to be available for a community to attract new citizens. A burgeoning population attracts business and secondary industries, thus adding tax money to the coffers of the community.

But when does development get out of hand, resulting in the suburban squalor so often seen in many United States communities? And who pulls in the reins?

The answer to the questions posed above is the same. The elected officials who follow procedures implemented by previously elected officials.

No amount of behind the scene lobbying or rabble-raising should be allowed to interfere with the 'voice of the public.'

We are, after all, a democracy.

