

the HERALD Outlook

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Shopping around pays dividends

TORONTO - It pays to shop. Take telephones, for example. Or computers, fax machines and printers.

My sister, Elaine, is starting a new business. She has been looking for a two-line telephone. She is also looking for a fax machine. I am looking for a portable computer, printer and answering machine. So I offered to shop for both of us.

Altogether, this office equipment is worth thousands of dollars. Armed with magazine stories about good equipment for home offices and small businesses, I set out to find the best machines for the price. The price varied far more than I had imagined.

Elaine decided on the Panasonic Esaphone. Eaton's is asking \$199 for this popular telephone. Bell Canada wants \$179. Neither store had any in stock. Undaunted, I set off up Yonge Street. In time, I came upon a small electronics store that sold Esaphones for \$159. They had two left, so I took them.

The Panasonic answering machine I wanted is \$229 at Eaton's, \$219 at Bell and \$169 at the electronics store. Naturally, I bought one.

SINKING FEELING

Satisfied with my purchases, I went home and stretched out with The Sunday New York Times. There, in a two-page advertisement, I read the bad news. Manhattan's 47 St. Photo is selling the Panasonic telephones for \$69 (U.S.).

Add the exchange rate, the federal sales tax and duty on Japanese-made telephones and the price comes to about \$111 in Canadian funds. So much for my bargain.

Alarmed, I compared computers next. One company, a Georgia liquidator, is selling Zenith Turboport 386 Laptop computers for \$2,595 (U.S.), plus shipping. Zenith products are manufactured in the United States so there is no duty on them.

Federal sales tax is 13.5 per cent and a U. S. dollar costs \$1.18. This brings the cost of the computer to about \$3,500 in Canadian funds, com-



pared with a price of \$5,000 or more in Canada.

But buying a computer by mail order seems risky, so I compared another computer I had priced - a Toshiba T1200XE with a 20 megabyte hard drive - with 47 St. Photo. Curiously, it was cheaper in Canada than it was in the United States. That's based on a price of roughly \$4,400 at Computerland.

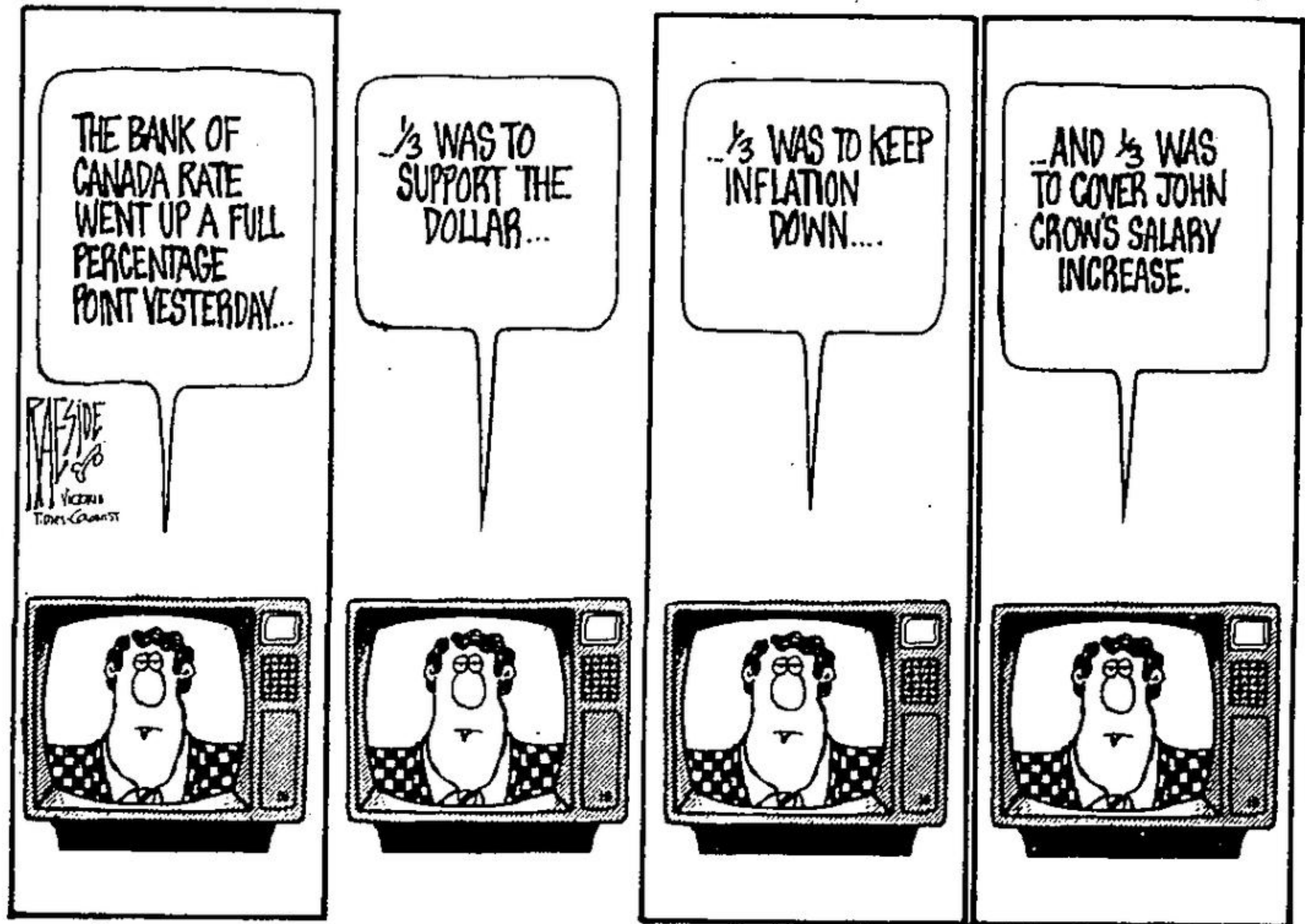
Yet 47 St. Photo is charging a fraction of what Computerland wants for an internal modem. The Manhattan company is charging the equivalent of \$135, compared with Computerland's \$400.

MOSTLY CHEAPER

The same thing happened when I compared prices for printers and fax machines. The Computer Factory in Manhattan beat Computerland's price for the Hewlett Packard LaserJet IIP printer, but not by much. The difference was about \$125 in Canadian funds.

The situation with fax machines is more complex because the model numbers differ in Canada and the United States. Generally, though, faxes are cheaper in the United States than they are in Canada.

Someone in the market for new equipment would do well to shop both sides of the border. If you can wait until the new goods and services tax comes into effect next January, all the better - the tax on imported goods will drop from 13.5 per cent to seven per cent. The risk is that the Canadian dollar will drop as well. This would make U.S. goods more expensive to buy.



United States farmers get massive aid

WASHINGTON - Canadian farmers must be bewildered as they look south to see American politicians anxious to find money they can give away to their country's farmers.

The massive 1990 U.S. Farm Bill, which has been approved by the Senate agriculture committee, goes to Congress sometime this month. Its cost had been nudged up from an expected \$50 billion over five years to about \$55 billion.

That's about \$500 million a year more than would be spent if Congress had merely extended the current farm bill and adjusted it for inflation. That 1985 bill was credited with putting farmers back on their feet during the past five years, primarily through large transfers of cash from the federal treasury.

Despite the financial crisis facing the U.S., the world's largest debtor nation, legislators barely hesitated before voting to continue transferring massive amounts of money to farmers at the taxpayers' expense.

Since the members of the committee who oversee the farm bill are from farm states, there's a powerful incentive to grab as much cash as they can get. Many of them must have had dizzying thoughts about issuing press releases in their home districts boasting about how much more money they had obtained for their constituents.

DECEPTIVE

However, a 15-4 vote by the Senate farm committee to approve the farm bill may be a deceptive indication of how much support there is for five more years of high subsidies. Observers will be looking for fireworks in Senate when the bill comes up for debate.

With President George Bush's reversal of his famous 1988 campaign pledge - "Read my lips, no new taxes" - the seriousness of the U.S. budget deficit has hit home.

The Senate committee has already shown unusual reluctance to increase spending by defeating a proposed amendment by a Montana Democrat who wanted large increases in target prices, the guaranteed minimum prices farmers get for their crops.

Kevin Bell

Washington Bureau
Thomson News Service



Even farmers who are benefiting are beginning to question the high level of subsidies, says Congressman Barney Frank, a Massachusetts Democrat. "The public is no longer saying that as long as the money is being wasted in our district, it's OK," he said.

One of the farm programs under attack is the U.S. sugar policy, which has been labelled by critics as "super welfare" that costs consumers an estimated \$2.4 billion a year in higher sugar prices.

SWEET DEAL

It's a sweet deal for sugar beet growers. They are guaranteed a price of 21 cents a pound, about nine cents higher than the current world price, while the government restricts imports of low-cost sugar, including imports from Canada.

Congressman Bill Frenzel, a Minnesota Republican who has joined the anti-farm bill coalition, calls the sugar program "an abomination" that hits shoppers while punishing poor countries such as the Dominican Republic, which desperately needs the cash from sugar exports.

Under the U. S. dairy program, the government guarantees that it will purchase farmers' excess butter despite the product's declining popularity because of its high cholesterol.

Last year, Washington bought 348 million pounds of butter for \$383 million. Millions of pounds of butter are stored around the country for two or three years until they are sold, often at cut-rate prices to school lunch programs or military bases.

Both programs would continue at present levels under the proposed farm bill.

Poets' Corner

I KNEW HIM BEST

These days are filled with grief
For a loved one gone to rest.
Of one who is still special
To me, who knew him best.

Anyone known to him
Could tell we fought like hell.
You didn't have to know us,
Not even very well.

Maybe you just met us,
Could see through every glare.
You may have turned away,
For you didn't like to stare.

We got by, though I wondered
why
Through each and every row.
Despite our many arguments...
Did we love each other, anyhow?

Do not encourage any relation-
ship
With daily fighting power.
That makes people tired and sick
And fearful by the hour.

Many disagreements, are a thing
to be.
But, they need not be hurtful
To that point where none agree.
Pain is not to be fooled with,
Not even playfully.

It could be quite a horror - a riot.
The kids would plead for peace
and quiet.
It wasn't good for us - for them
Now all is quiet, for this, I say...
Amen!

A. R.
Georgetown

Kids

They wet their beds
And mess with our heads.
They scuff up their knees
And never say please.
They wreck up the place
And get food on their face.
They make huge demands
And disobey all commands.
They drive us to drink,
And then over the brink
Of stopping their breath
Or scaring them to death,
We stop and reflect
On the places we wrecked.
The stuff that we did
When we were a kid.
The parents we hated
For being out dated,
And we think, "What the hell?
We've been there as well."

By J. B.
Acton.

Write us a letter!

The Herald wants to hear from you. If you have an opinion you want to express or a comment to make, send us a letter or drop by the office. Our address is 45 Guelph St., Georgetown, Ont., L7G 3Z6.

All letters must be signed. Please include your address and telephone number for verification.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters due to space limitations or libel.