

Editorial

Federal government is a myth!

I have come to the conclusion, after countless hours of painstaking research, that in fact, our federal government does not exist.

In effect, our national government is a myth. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney is a myth and the whole crew comfortably esconced on Parliament Hill in Ottawa have obviously 'mythed the boat.'

Let's talk turkey here - oops, Freudian slip methinks.

Seriously though, just what do we get from the federal government for the taxes that Ottawa collects?

A report from the Vancouver-based Fraser Institute (a non-political study group) suggests that the average Canadian family (with a household income of \$49,500) will pay the federal government \$11,722 in taxes.

After inflation, this represents a 26.4 per cent rise since the Progressive Conservatives came to power in 1984.

Fair enough, one might argue, but the federal government takes care of Canadians with this tax money. Wrong again on flip side of a looney.

On the tax dollar, 34 cents alone goes just to pay the interest on the public debt. (run up by the way, by the federal government). Sixteen cents is transferred to the provinces for jointly-financed programs such as medicare and welfare. Eight cents out of every dollar goes to the Canadian military (and we all know how impressively the army acted during the Oka standoff) and 12 cents of every tax dollar goes simply to keep the federal bureaucracy well-oiled - or well-heeled, depending on your point of view.

That leaves 30 cents of every federal tax dollar for the Ottawans to provide sustenance to the Canadian people.

But what does the federal government provide?

Health care, schools and our road systems are provincial

responsibilities. Need a cop, want your garbage taken away, don't call Ottawa because these are municipal responsibilities.

Canada Post - that shining example of efficiency - is a self-supporting crown corporation. Air Canada was put on the market and quickly gobbled-up and now Petro Canada is for sale.

It is estimated that Ottawa uses \$400 million tax dollars a day. For what, pray tell.

Now I like horses just as much as the next guy and also enjoy a good show. But I don't feel like forking over tax dollars to the feds just so some tourists can enjoy the Mounties and their Musical Ride.

So now, we come back to the original premise, that the federal government is a myth and merely a figment of some bored-bureaucrats lively imagination.

Until Mr. Mulroney and his political party, or any federal political party for that matter, can show me that I am getting value for my tax dollar I have to question if these guys really know what they are doing. Similarly, I would question any and all decisions made from Ottawa that affect my pay check, or lack of same.

Maybe this is all just a bad dream and when we collectively wake up, Ottawa-based politicians will no longer be with us.

Now that would be a myth I could handle.

Colin Gibson

Editor's Notebook



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Poets' Corner

THE WALKING PLOW
As a lad, I ploughed the ground
The only job then for me to be found
Fed the pigs, and milked the cow
I walked behind the walking plow
The horses, they were hard and tough
You would very seldom hear them puff
I'd try to keep those furrows straight
There was no time to stop, or wait
I would walk ten miles each day
A steady grind, no time to play
Every day you'd plow the same amount
Step it by yards, that's how you'd count
Sometimes I'd strike a jagged stone
The plow handles, left a bruised bone
A broken plow would make you care
Take all day to replace a share
Work was hard, life was rough
Men those days were better stuff
Down by the pretty little stream
It surely was a painters dream
Way up in the apple tree
All the birds would sing to me
Over by the house, the bark of a dog
On the edge of the swamp, the croak of a frog
By the bush, the caw of the crow
The blackest bird I ever did know
All these things, as I plowed my way
They are the memories of my boyhood day.

by Albert Brooks
R.R. 1, Limehouse

Dear God
How can I bring Together
A family in distress
Should I stand up firmly
Or pretend I'm just a guest.

I pray for them, my family
I worship the smiles they give
I hope for them happiness
As long as I shall live.

I've learned by their mistakes
I've offered them my hand
But still there's more confusion
Then either can withstand.

They've read your holy book
They visit you each week
But still the hate is growing
Their love is getting meek.

They need a stronger person
Oh God, look out, it's you
Show them the way to happiness
Please help our family through.

By M.G.
Acton

VOKAL
I am the Native.
You all may agree,
It is the ... outsider,
Wishing, the outsider, was me!

Once they were welcomed.
We wished them the best.
And, ever since then,
We've been given no rest.

The quickest means
To destroy us, you see,
Was to issue monies,
The current, currency.

Putting us on welfare,
Their idea of ... charity.
Once, THEY were guests.
Pride won't escape ... ME!

L.R.
Georgetown.

Smoking can make a person a perpetual teenager

At long last, there's some truly glorious news to pass along to smokers.

I have just discovered that smoking carries a wonderful fringe-benefit hitherto unknown to medical science: it keeps you young.

Honest. This is totally and absolutely true.

Well, it's sort of true. Smoking may not exactly keep you young - but here in 1990, it can make you feel like a perpetual teenager, which is surely the next best thing.

Trust me. You're talking to a 34-year-old man who has just been nailed for smoking in the washroom.

Well, this isn't strictly true either. It wasn't exactly a washroom. It was the car-deck of a passenger ferry. But the feeling was precisely the same.

All of a sudden, I'm no longer just another nondescript male verging on middle-age. I'm now the world's oldest delinquent.

Mom always said I'd amount to something.

Naturally, you're dying to hear about my encounter with the Smoking Police. It happened on the weekend, and I've been having a cheerful chuckle about it ever since.

After all, it's not the sort of thing I'd feel bitter about. Heavens, no.

I'm not the sort of guy to complain about getting busted for smoking while sitting in my own car, with the flipping windows rolled up, trusting in the belief that we're living in a democracy and not Stalin's bleeding Russia, where jack-booted thugs made a practice of stomping up to respectable



Ian Weir
Weir's View
Toronto News Service

citizens and...

But I digress. We were discussing the many cheerful chuckles I've been having. Ha-Ha.

In any case, there I was - relaxing in my car, enjoying the view and the carefree pleasures of blowing secondary smoke at my old pal Miller, who was coughing gently in the passenger's seat - when there was a sudden sharp rapping at the window.

I rolled it down, and there stood a very large Car Deck Attendant, glowering down at me the exact expression my junior high school vice-principal had worn the day he confronted me with the underground newspaper I'd been hoping my friend Doug Barreel would get blamed for instead.

"Yes," I said nervously.

"This is a ferry," he snapped. "What are you doing with that cigarette, young man?"

Actually, I can't remember if he really called me "young man." He may have said "you wretched boy" instead. Whatever.

The point is, I didn't have time to think. I was suddenly seized by an overpowering urge to blurt out the truth - which was that it wasn't my

cigarette, it was Miller's cigarette, and that Miller should be punished instead, even though he'd deny everything, being a dirty rotten liar who went around getting other people in trouble.

"I'm going to have to report you," the Car Deck Attendant snarled, and stomped around back to take my license number.

Miller looked at me. I looked back at Miller - and was suddenly seized by the terrible fear that he might tell my Dad.

Naturally, this wasn't a very logical thought. After all, my father already knows I smoke. There's not much he can do about it, since it's much too late to send me to private school.

In any case, this whole episode may yet have a tragic ending, since I don't know what happens to people who get reported for smoking on the ferry.

Do they send you to jail? Do they fine you? Or do they just suspend you from all extra-curricular activities and make you clean up the Science Room at lunch hour?

But in the meantime, I've decided to look on the bright side - which is that smoking has actually given me back my adolescence.

It's quite a delightful feeling, actually. And it opens up some really neat-o-possibilities.

Tonight, I think I'll spray-paint something very rude on my neighbor's fence. Then I'll produce another edition of the underground newspaper, and perhaps freak my brother out by hiding his bicycle - or (as it happens) his Mazda RX7, which is even better.

And then I'll blame it all on Miller.