

Columnists

Health care specialists must realize responsibilities

Banning the sale of cigarettes from drug stores, says the owner of the Shopper's Drug Mart in Georgetown will not stop people from smoking.

Al Fraser uses this argument to defend his selling of cigarettes despite opposition by the Ontario College of Pharmacists. The college wants its members to stop selling tobacco products as soon as possible. It has established a task force to research the various legal ways the sale of tobacco in drug stores can be stopped.

Mr. Fraser's argument is correct, in a narrow sense. Those who want to buy cigarettes are not so lazy that if the drug store where they normally bought their "cancer sticks" one day stopped

selling them, they wouldn't take the time to pick up a pack at some other store.

The bombardment of anti-smoking education that people have been exposed to over the many years is another reason justifying Mr. Fraser's position. I'd be hard pressed to believe any smoker who told me he had no idea that smoking is a major cause of cancer and heart disease.

Yet it has been education that has greatly contributed to the drop in the number of people who smoke. As a member of the health care profession Mr. Fraser has an obligation to contribute to this educational process.



Ben's Banter
By Ben Dummett

Mr. Fraser says that his drug store offers counselling to those who want to kick the habit. In this sense one could argue Mr. Fraser is warning people of the dangers smoking presents. I don't know about you but I see a contradic-

tion in logic here. You don't tell somebody not to do something and then turn around and make it easy for them to do it. When this happens the whole exercise is discredited.

The question of whether the sale of cigarettes should be banned from drugstores should be considered in the context of what message will be sent out to the public. It shouldn't be considered, as Mr. Fraser has done, in the context of will it end smoking.

There is no one solution to convincing people to stop smoking. It's only through continual reinforcement of the anti smoking message that cigarettes may someday disappear.

Mr. Fraser said he would only

ban tobacco products from his store if they were declared illegal.

Here again, Mr. Fraser is emphasizing a reactive instead of a proactive position to the smoking problem. This position appears that more cynical knowing it's highly unlikely the government would ever ban something that has been legal in society for so long.

On top of that how would the government raise more money.

The public also has a role in encouraging drugstores to ban the sale of tobacco products. Simply put don't support those that do. Nothing talks louder than money or should I say the lack of it.

For the record, I'm a smoker.

Economic issues will dictate Quebec's future

OTTAWA - Economic issues will figure prominently when the Belanger-Campeau Commission, set up to investigate Quebec's political and constitutional future, gets down to business.

One key question is: would an independent Quebec continue to use the Canadian dollar and adhere to interest-rate policy established by the Bank of Canada.

Bloc Blasts

Recently, the Bloc Quebecois - that collection of former Liberal and Conservative MPs that followed Lucien Bouchard out of the mainstream - blasted the Bank of Canada's monetary policy.

The Bloc's finance critic, Benoit Tremblay, called on Finance Minister Michael Wilson to force the central bank to lower interest rates. Tremblay complained the bank had tailored its

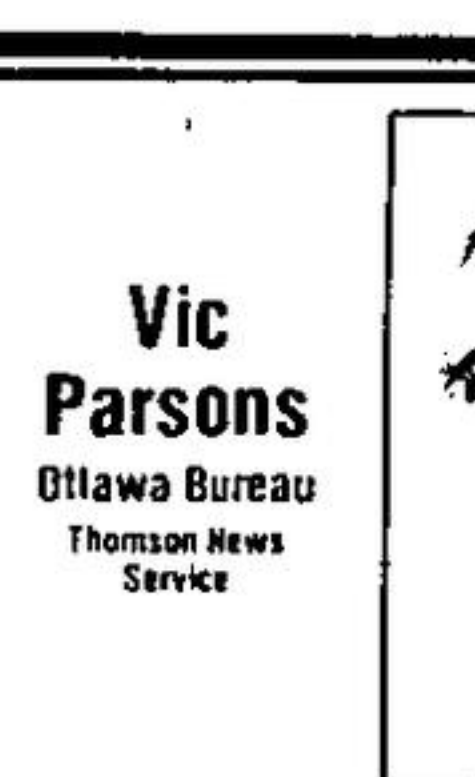
rate to fight inflation in Ontario and had pushed borrowing charges two-to-three percentage points higher than necessary.

"Since 1981, Quebec has not known a level of economic activity that would justify such high interest rates," Tremblay said.

But this criticism is not unique. One could imagine Western opposition MPs or provincial premiers of any political stripe making an identical charge. Indeed, in some post-Confederation period, one could imagine Quebec and the West joining forces to pressure against punishing interest rates.

With or without Confederation, and whether Quebec remains part of any monetary union or drops out, stresses are going to exist.

When John Crow, the Bank of Canada governor, released his last annual report, he was asked



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hypothetically how a central bank could function if Quebec separated. Could he serve two masters?

Crow called a "provocative" question and noted the 12-member European Community is now investigating mechanisms to co-ordinate monetary policy as economic union approaches in 1992. The EC's conclusions could

prove instructive.

Own Currency?

But what if an independent Quebec decides it has had enough of monetary union? There is, after all, the possibility some politicians would shun Quebec or seek to punish it for leaving the fold. Or, what if Quebec's political leaders decided the central bank was not doing enough to combat inflation? Could Quebec establish its own currency and interest-rate policies?

A decision to establish a Quebec "dollar" would bring its own costs, a recent study concluded. But, if pegged to the U.S. dollar or a group of other foreign currencies, it would be a viable option.

David Laidler, an economics professor at the University of Western Ontario, says a Quebec dollar with a value tied to the American buck would be a se-

cond choice to continuing monetary union.

Laidler, in a recent article in the influential C. D. Howe Institute's publication Commentary, suggests a Quebec currency would be hit hard if it was just cast loose from the Canadian dollar. It would become "an object of suspicion" on foreign markets and this would increase Quebec's international debt as traders would demand a premium to accept it.

Pegging a Quebec dollar to the loonie is not a solution, either, Laidler suggests. Why bother breaking out of a monetary union if Quebec's currency is simply going to move up and down with the Canadian dollar?

If logic prevails, it seems Canada and Quebec will continue some form of economic union regardless of what happens on the political front.

Damage control simply won't wash

OTTAWA - That was a noble effort at damage control by Maurice Sauve - no doubt with some guidance from his wife - but it simply won't wash.

Try as he might, the former Liberal cabinet minister will never convince us that his wife, Jeanne Sauve, was not pointing fingers when she offered a few observations about Canada to an audience in Paris.

The former governor general, famous for locking the gates to the 80-acre grounds of Rideau Hall, hasn't made many speeches since vacating the property last year. But, according to reports from France, she didn't hold back when she finally got the floor.

What she said, among other things, was that Canada "lacks a leader who has a clear idea of what Canada is and who proposes that idea to the people."

Now, one doesn't require a doctorate in political science to interpret this as - at the very least - somewhat of a slight toward one Brian Mulroney. He is, after all, the prime minister of Canada, and when one talks about national leadership, or lack of it, he justifiably springs to mind.

Obviously, if Madame Sauve liked the way the present prime minister is doing things, she wouldn't feel the urge to say Canada lacks a leader who has a clear idea of the country. Regal protocol aside, Mr. Mulroney is the leader of Canada.

WON'T WORK

When the former vice-regal lady heard her remarks had hit the headlines in Canada, she was understandably unhappy. While still in the French capital, she got on the phone to her husband in Montreal.

Quickly, the one-time federal forestry minister got on the



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phone himself and launched his damage-control mission. He said that his wife "in no way pointed a finger at the present leadership in Canada." What she was talking about, he said, was the need for new ideas and new leadership in constitutional matters.

"The context of her statement suggests that new leadership should come from all sectors of society."

The gentleman could be right about the context. But, when it comes to finger-pointing, the explanation is much more difficult to digest, particularly since there was no denial of what his wife was reported to have said.

Mr. Sauve's cause was not helped when he said his wife didn't know reporters were listening. "There were no journalists that were supposed to be there."

"Someone must have sneaked in."

Whenever anyone pleads the case that reporters were not supposed to be there, it tends to increase the credibility of what had been reported.

If the former governor general argued that she was pointing the finger at leaders of all federal political parties, we could easily buy that. Or, if she wanted to expand her target area to include

provincial premiers, that would also be a marketable explanation.

But, to pretend there was no finger pointing whatsoever simply won't work.

No Warmth

Anyway, everyone who has ever passed through Ottawa knows full well that Madame Sauve and Brian Mulroney have never shared a mutual admiration. Quite the contrary. There is every reason to believe they dislike each other with some unrestrained enthusiasm.

You might recall the time Mr. Mulroney, fresh-faced in office back in 1985, organized the Shamrock Summit in Quebec City so he could entertain then president Ronald Reagan. Well, by all standards of protocol, Madame Sauve should have been there, as head of state, to welcome another visiting head of state.

But the prime minister, not one to be upstaged, said the summit was a "working meeting" and therefore did not require a regal welcoming committee of one. He could handle that quite nicely himself, thank you.

The displeasure of the governor general, we learned, was considerable. The former Liberal cabinet minister and Commons Speaker was, as they say in regal circles, not amused.

And it's reliably reported that the royal representative, who had been appointed to the hand-shaking job by Pierre Trudeau, became less amused with the new leader of her government with each passing day. No one ever thought she enjoyed delivering those throne speeches - written by people in the prime minister's office - listing the proud accomplishments of "my govern-

ment".

Now, however, she seems to be getting her own back. And one can assume that Mr. Mulroney gets absolutely no enjoyment

from reading her speech, even if via the newspapers.

Good try, Mr. Sauve, but no amount of damage-control will change things.

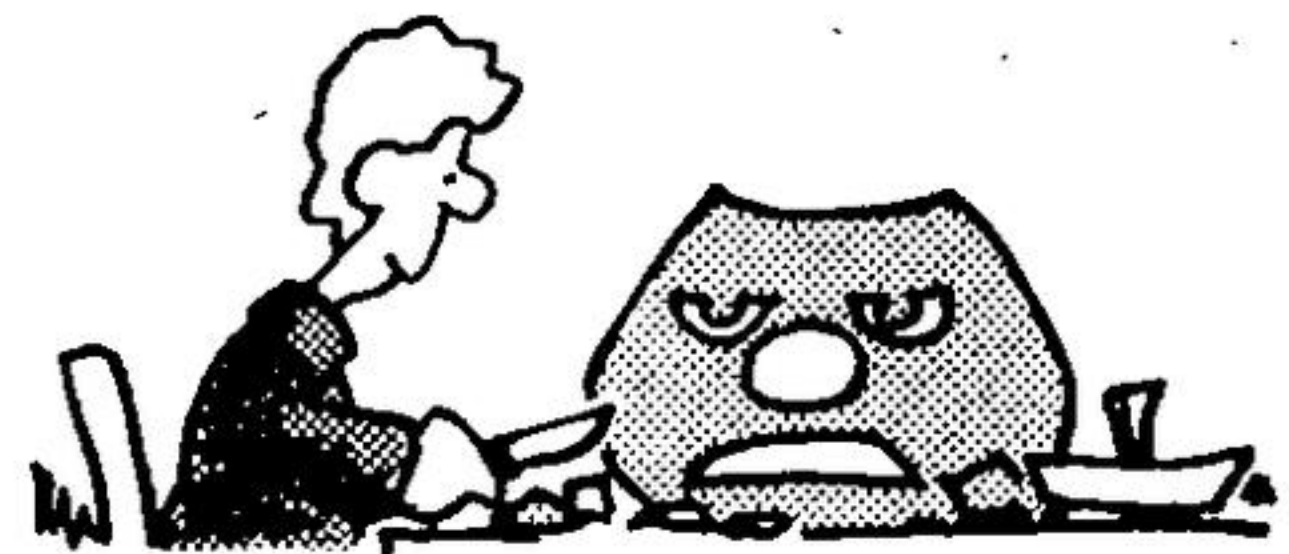
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