

Editorial

Senate Christmas greetings

As has been mentioned in this space before, at times I am amazed by not only the source but the wealth of material which finds its way to my little cubbyhole at the Halton Hills Herald, courtesy of Canada Post.

Lately there have been some nice offerings, some not so nice, some naughty and even some Christmas cards, which are always appreciated.

I am a firm believer in freedom of speech and the rights of an individual as long as both fall within the realm of relative good taste and do not threaten what I perceive to be the common good.

Everyone has a right to their own opinion and should be allowed to express themselves in their own unique way. Even if the grammar is not quite correct, or the spelling needs to be corrected.

Having noted these points, regular readers are also aware that I am not afraid to take a stand on an issue or attack things or individuals - especially politicians - whom I feel are acting against the common good. As with any other citizen in Canada, I have this right.

I am against the about-to-be-imposed GST, for a number of reasons.

I feel it is an inequitable tax that will cause little concern among the 'haves' in Canada while the 'have-nots' will be forced even deeper into poverty.

This will have a downward cascading effect on a community's economy as less money will be allowed to flow into the small business sector and the community as a whole will feel the pinch.

I also am against the GST because of the despicable way it is being forced down our collective throats by the Mulroney federal government.

The other day I received in the mail what might best be termed a Christmas GST warning. It came postmarked the Senate, Ottawa, Ontario. It obviously was forwarded by those Liberal Senators who are fighting a losing battle against the GST.

I would like to share the letter with my readers.

HAVE A MERRY GST CHRISTMAS

Charles Dickens's ghost of Christmas yet-to-come could not have invented a gloomier picture than what is being inflicted on us by the Mulroney government.

Our first Christmas under the GST will follow our first full year of paying 7 per cent more dozens of times per day. It will apply to everything from the towels and toothpaste in the morning, to the children's lunch time snacks, from paying the utility bills in the afternoon to turning off the bedside lamp at night. The money we usually try to put aside for Christmas will be eaten up day in and day out paying this new tax. As if that isn't mean enough, the special things we buy at Christmas will also cost us 7 per cent more.

Think about it as you pile the kids into the station wagon and head off to pick up the Christmas tree - just one of the hundreds of things that will cost you 7 per cent more.

Stop at the store to pick up the decorations,

- the tree lights - 7 per cent more.
- special ornaments - 7 per cent more.
- coloured balls - 7 per cent more.
- icicles - 7 per cent more.
- a star for the top - 7 per cent more.

-perhaps some spray-on frost for the windows - 7 per cent more.

-some outside lights or a wreath for the door - 7 per cent more.

Drop in at Macdonalds or Harvey's on the way back for some hot chocolate - 7 per cent more.

- a hot dog or a hamburger for the kids - 7 per cent more.
- a cup of coffee - 7 per cent more.

Colin Gibson

Editor's Notebook



In the freezing weather, the car stalls in the parking lot. Call a tow truck for a boost - 7 per cent more.

As you struggle to set up the tree, you accidentally stain the new living room rug. Get it cleaned - 7 per cent more.

Turn on the tree lights. Turn them off two minutes later when you realize that it is now costing you 7 per cent more for electricity.

With the tree in place, head to the mall to do some Christmas shopping.

- pull into the parking lot - 7 per cent more.
- pick out a nice housecoat for Aunt Mable - 7 per cent more.
- slippers for Uncle Bob - 7 per cent more.
- a portable typewriter for your teenager - 7 per cent more.
- a train set for your youngest child - 7 per cent more.
- a teddy bear for the neighbours' new baby - 7 per cent more.
- a wallet for the paperboy - 7 per cent more.
- a copy of Trivial Pursuit for cousin George - 7 per cent more.
- a Bart Simpson T-shirt for your 4 year old - 7 per cent more.
- Stop at the bakery for Christmas cookies - 7 per cent more.
- Pick up some candy for the children's stockings - 7 per cent more.
- a paper Christmas table cover - 7 per cent more.
- Christmas serviettes - 7 per cent more.
- candles for the table - 7 per cent more.
- paper hats and crackers - 7 per cent more.

Buy a nice new quilt for the spare bed because your parents are coming for the holidays - 7 per cent more.

They arrive from the airport in a taxi - 7 per cent more for the ride.

Take a trip to the sporting goods store to pick out some hockey equipment for your 10 year old superstar.

- skates - 7 per cent more.
- hockey stick - 7 per cent more.
- helmet - 7 per cent more.
- shoulder pads - 7 per cent more.

Because of the GST you don't have enough to pay for it all. You take back the shoulder pads. As you wait for the clerk to calculate the refund, it occurs to you that if the GST had been around when Wayne Gretzky was 10, he would probably be selling insurance today instead of scoring his 2,000th goal in the NHL.

Back home you realize you forgot to get something for your father-in-law so you buy him a subscription to Macleans. As you are writing out the cheque and adding the 7 per cent, you remember his boast about voting for the Tories. Cancel the subscription. Send him a tax free copy of the Senate Report on the GST instead.

Finally, it is Christmas Eve. You put out an extra stocking. You mark it Michael Wilson just to see what will happen. On Christmas morning you're not surprised to find that all that is in it is a lump of coal - and that costs 7 per cent more too.

Later, as you sit down to Christmas dinner, you offer a toast to the turkey. Your family tells you not to talk about the Prime Minister until after dessert.

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George of Arabia

Kashmir has become a killing field

It was only a tiny one paragraph item in the newspaper: a 12-year-old girl, accused of being an informant, was murdered by Muslim separatists.

The story came from Sringagar, in Kashmir, the lovely mountain and valley land tucked into the Himalayan Mountains between India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and China.

It has become a killing field. Somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 people have already died this year alone, which makes the casualty totals from the battlegrounds the western media have been obsessed with, such as the Palestinian intefadeh, pale into insignificance.

More important, Kashmir could be the trigger for something more dangerous: war between India and Pakistan. India definitely has nuclear weapons; Pakistan might. A number of commentators have been noting the growing tension in the area, and that this time of year is the best for military campaigning along the India-Pakistan border.

CONFLICT

Jammu and Kashmir - to use the official Indian provincial title - has been a focus for conflict between India and Pakistan since British India was partitioned into the two countries in 1947. Kashmir had a majority Muslim population, a one-fifth Hindu minority, but a Hindu prince. He opted to join a secular India rather than an Islamic-based Pakistan.

His people felt otherwise, and rebellion has sputtered off and on in the region ever since. About six million people live in Indian-occupied Kashmir, an area less

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than one-fifth the size of Saskatchewan. The remaining extremely mountainous 60 per cent is held by Pakistan and, in part, by China. It was lost by India in the 1962 Sino-Indian War.

Currently, there is serious shopping up near the roof of the world at the 20,000-foot-high Siachen Glacier, where the ceasefire lines from two earlier Indo-Pakistani wars over Kashmir have never been clearly established.

Still, it is down in the inhabited valleys where the real trigger for a new war lies.

Muslim separatists, some wanting independence and some wanting merger with Pakistan, have been conducting increasingly violent attacks upon Indian authorities and non-Muslim minorities.

Depending upon the viewpoint, Indian government reaction has been either forceful or heavy-handed. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was deployed in Kashmir in late

January, and almost immediately there was a massacre of curfew-breaking Muslim demonstrators at Gowkadal Bridge in Srinagar. After Western reporters wrote about it, Indian banned Western reporters from Kashmir.

Since then, it has been hard to ascertain what is actually happening, other than that killings, kidnappings and inter-communal violence have been on the rise all year.

CAPTURED

In early August, however, Indian troops captured much of the top leadership of the most important pre-independence group, the Liberation Front.

Whether this means a downturn in the violence is still an open question, as some reports from the area indicate the brutality and communal bias of the CRPF is actually making matters worse.

And while the release of the story of the 12-year-old girl's death at the hands of rebels is probably intended by the Indians to bring censure on Muslim separatist heads, there is no reason to doubt its accuracy. Far worse things have been done by both sides when Western reporters have been present to verify them.

Beyond the trials and tribulations that local people must suffer, however, there is the outside world's great fear.

This is that India - which probably rightly accuses Pakistan of aiding the rebels - will decide to punish the source of the aggression by invading Pakistan.

It is - while that India, with twice the area and four times the armament - Pakistan, couldn't lose.

Unless Pakistan goes nuclear.