

People's Forum

People should speak up

Editor's note: The following letter was released to the Halton Hills Herald for publication.

Editor,
The Georgetown Independent
211 Armstrong Avenue
Georgetown, Ontario
L7G 4X5

RE: "Region's \$1 M surplus to cushion budget blow" article by Norman Nelson, Wednesday, November 28, 1990.

Dear Editor:
The last two paragraphs of the article mentioned above should make tax payers in Halton Region very nervous. The paragraphs read:

"Burlington Mayor Roly Bird pointed to an area in waste management where he hopes further savings can be realized. Under the terms of its waste handling contract, Halton faces a \$240,000 penalty if it doesn't generate enough garbage, a possibility the Region acknowledges.

Bird quipped that Halton should avoid the penalty by buying enough garbage to meet its quota from another

municipality."
When Halton Region negotiated the contract with NorJohn to provide a transfer station for garbage, they committed to providing a minimum tonnage per year. According to the Region, this was necessary in order to cover capital and operating expenses. So the Region gave its best guess at an annual tonnage and this year we will be "short" by about 20,000 tonnes. Halton Region has notified the other GTA Regions (Peel, Durham, Metro and York) that this surplus capacity exists.

What!!!!??? Short of garbage!!!!??? Does this mean that the more our dedicated citizens reduce their garbage, the higher the penalty to the Region??? Does this also mean that our efforts to cut waste could let a less ambitious municipality off the hook??? What happens when we reach the Ministry of the Environment's target of 50 per cent waste reduction? Will we be wasting money searching for garbage - money that should be spent on further waste reduction?

On Wednesday, November 28,

1990, Halton Region approved a "Proposal Call For Waste Management Services" (PW #209/90). Private sector proposals may include Energy From Waste (incineration). Just as with the transfer station, a minimum tonnage will be required to cover the extremely high capital and operating expenses. In this decade of change and increasing environmental awareness, and with a clear provincial commitment to waste reduction, it is extremely difficult to predict how much garbage we will be making in 20 years. (The economic amortization of an incinerator is usually 20 years).

If you think there is potential conflict between waste reduction and incineration, now is the time to speak up. Call your local Councillor, your Mayor, your Regional Councillor, the Regional Chairman, your Member of Provincial Parliament, the Environment Minister and ICE (Incineration Counteracts the Environment - Rita Landry 878-7817).

Sincerely,
Diane van de Valk,
Georgetown.

Socialist agenda

Dear Editor,

In the anniversary of the Montreal massacre, one of the issues covered by the media and promoted by feminist groups has been the issue of "pay equity." The wording "pay equity" has been used for two distinct issues, which deserve separate discussion.

The issue of "equal pay for equal work" is a women's issue, as unfortunately women are still discriminated against in some work places. It is also a discrimination issue, as it affects some minorities (e.g., non-white, non-anglo-saxon). There is no question in our mind that ANYONE performing that same job should be judged solely on the basis of experience and performance and not by their sex or skin colour.

The issue of "equal pay for work of equal VALUE" is instead a socialist policy, as it im-

plies a government VALUE decision on the importance of each job. The previous Liberal Ontario government has started its implementation (under recommendation of Judge Rosalie Abella) and the current NDP government is committed to complete the job. The centralized decision of salary levels in both public and private sector is the same policy which caused the eastern block countries' economic collapse. We are deeply concerned that this socialist agenda is hidden under the respectable name of "pay equity."

The FCP calls for the media to expose this piece of misinformation and publish in-depth reports on exactly how the government is spending our money to implement this policy.

Giuseppe Gori,
Executive Vice President
Family Coalition Party
of Ontario.

Opinion

Wilson is guilty of political gamesmanship

By VIC PARSONS

Ottawa Bureau
Thomson News Service

OTTAWA - Revenue Canada's taxation statistics for 1988 only serve to highlight the folly of the political gamesmanship played by Finance Minister Michael Wilson in his tax-reform plans.

Wilson trumpeted the numbers this week to try to salvage a little credit for the personal income-tax reform that went into effect on July 1, 1988. Revenue Canada's figures show that most Canadians paid less in income tax that year than in 1987.

The finance minister desperately needed some good news to spread. With seven out of 10 Canadians griping about the pending goods and services tax, Wilson's name is mud in most parts of the country these days.

Unfortunately for him, and for the Conservative government, taxpayer memories are short. In fact, any voter gratitude owed the Tories from lower income taxes may have been used up in the 1988 federal election.

Let's back up a bit. One of the first promises of Brian Mulroney's fledgling government in 1984 was an overhaul of the tax system. It would be made fairer, simpler and would contribute to future economic growth, Wilson said then.

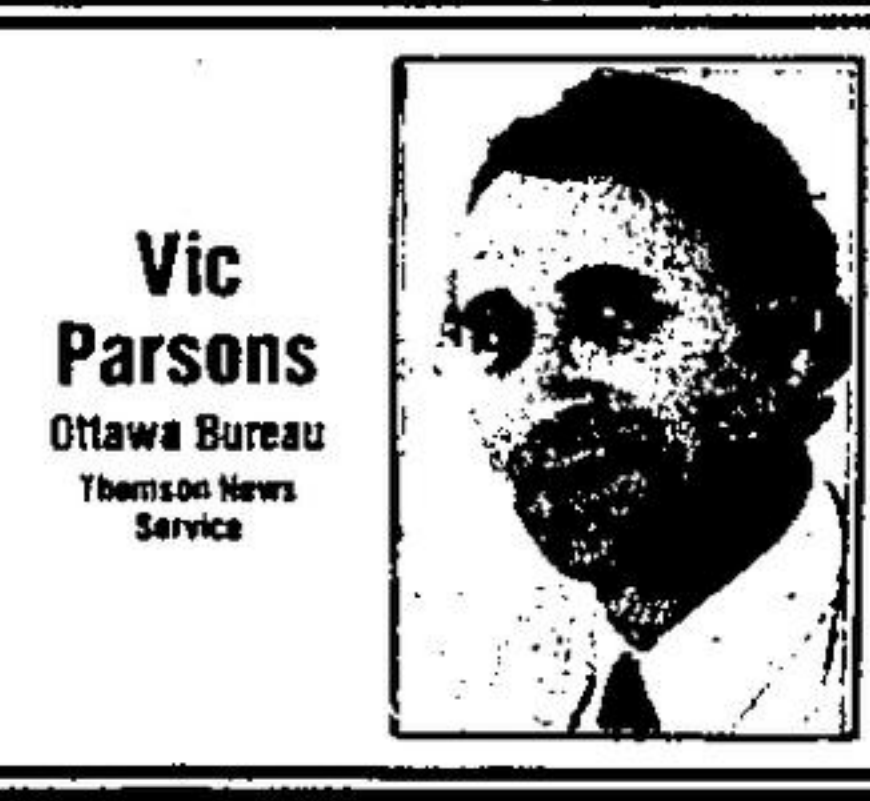
A decision was made to break the reform into two main phases. The first was the reduction in the number of personal income tax brackets to three from 10.

Special tax breaks were eliminated, and credits replaced a bewildering series of exemptions and deductions. Beginning July 1, 1988, most taxpayers saw a rise in their take-home pay. Wilson pledged 85 per cent of households would pay less tax.

EXTRA CASH

One example provided by the Finance Department suggested a married taxpayer with a family of four, earning \$25,000 a year, would have an extra \$10 to \$14 a week in disposable income, depending upon the province of residence.

One might quibble over the



precision of these numbers, but the thrust of income-tax reform seems to be borne out by Revenue Canada's numbers.

Certainly, the 75 per cent of taxpayers who earned less than \$30,000 in 1988 paid less income tax. In total, the 18 per cent of taxpayers who made between \$30,000 and \$50,000 paid a modest amount more than in 1987 (in fact, less than the inflation rate). So, it's quite likely - since many

of these taxpayers would have paid less - close to the mark.

Let's recall the timing of Phase I of tax reform. The benefit of the change would have first been felt in the months leading up to the November, 1988 election. A convenient coincidence? You be the judge.

The economic timing wasn't good, however. The summer of '88 was a boom time and inflationary pressures were building. The tax cut gave another push to inflation, ultimately leading to higher interest rates. Short-term politics overruled economics.

But, in 1988, the bad news was still to come, in the form of Phase II and the GST.

ONE-TWO PUNCH

This was not unforeseen. Here's what then Liberal leader John Turner had to say in June, 1987, when Wilson revealed his plan:

"It's not tax reform, it's a tax grab. It's a one-two punch that attempts to tell Canadians they're going to get some personal tax reductions next year. But the

sleepers is that in the following years, there's going to be the most massive increase in the sales tax side in Canadian history."

As a leader, Turner may have flopped. As a prognosticator, he did well.

Now, Wilson has got himself into a box. The political credit he may have gained from the 1988 income-tax reform was used up in the election that year.

When an election rolls around in 1992, taxpayers will have forgotten the candy offered four years before. The more recent memory will be of the GST raid conducted on consumers at a time when money was tight, jobs scarce and the economy in recession.

He would have been better advised to have followed the path used in New Zealand when its GST was introduced. The New Zealanders combined their GST and personal income tax cuts into a package in 1986, diffusing some of the public anger over a new retail tax.

Canadian federalism lacking a strong voice

OTTAWA - The idea might strike you as daffy, but if this country is going to hang together in one piece, we probably need a political party in English Canada to advocate Quebec independence.

Actually, we don't even require a full-blown party. A very credible individual advocate might do the trick.

It would be a bit of reverse psychology.

You see, as things stand, no one is advancing a strong case for federalism in Canada. The only thing people in that province are hearing, it seems, is about the glories of independence or, at least, sovereignty-association.

And everything is coming from Quebecers themselves. English Canada, and particularly the federal government, appears to be in a daze, sitting around silently while one province goes about deciding its own destiny.

When an anglo voice is heard, it's invariably in the form of a plea - or an apology. What Quebecers are hearing from outside are repetitive statements

about the importance of their province to the rest of the country, how Quebec's departure would destroy Canada, how desperately we want them to return to the national hearth.

Something like a jilted spouse begging a partner to come home, while the partner is surrounded by friends who preach the delights of divorce.

NEW APPROACH

Rather than being defensive and reactionary, what we should strive for is someone, or some movement, in English Canada to get out there and make the case that we'd be better off without Quebec.

No rantings or ravings, just some enthusiasm about how the rest of the country would be so much better off if it didn't have to pour so much money - and attention - into Quebec.

And let's not squabble about the figures. There are no two economists in the country who agree on how much a province gets out of Confederation compared to its contribution. It's certainly clear from some of the



testimony before Quebec's Belanger-Campeau commission that not all advocates of independence are beyond a bit of figure fudging.

You hear an occasional reference to the uncomfortable economic adjustment that would follow any form of independence, but nothing frightening. The overwhelming view of the commission witnesses so far is that Quebec would be a very viable entity on its own.

The view is so overwhelming, in fact, that federalist members

of the commission have banded together to organize a common defence of Canada. Not even the Quebec Liberal Party, long the bastion of federalism, is offering much help.

The commission hasn't even bothered to invite submissions from francophone groups outside Quebec - nor anyone else from other provinces.

About the only thing heard from the commission - hearings are televised live throughout the province - are Quebecers advocating sovereignty, and the occasional sorrowful reaction from English Canada. It's the jilted-spouse syndrome again. "I'll try to be more accommodating if you'll stay."

WON'T WORK

That, as everyone knows, doesn't work too well. Far better to say: "Take a hike; with only one mouth to feed, I'll stay here and live in relative luxury."

In constitutional terms, we wouldn't be that nasty, of course.

But it would certainly put an interesting twist on things if some

credible person in English Canada were to start taking a positive view of Quebec independence - positive for the rest of Canada, that is.

Human nature being what it is, this would obviously change some thought process in Quebec. I mean, those of us with experience in such matters are fully aware the best way to kick kids out of the house is to say how much they are needed at home.

On the other hand, talk about the glories of living without them and they'll stay home until retirement.

But if someone in, say, Toronto made a convincing case that English Canada would be better off without Quebec, and should encourage independence, it wouldn't take long for some Quebecers to mount a defence of federalism.

It might even become fashionable.

Pierre Trudeau used to say - and probably still does - that every initiative spawns a countervailing force.

Worth a try.