

People's Forum

Some members of society inconsiderate and self-centred

To the Editor:

For the first time in my life I am writing a letter to a newspaper to point out yet another example of the self-centred and inconsiderate nature of some members of our society. Because of a decline in my health and mobility, I recently received a Handicapped Parking Permit from the Ministry of Transportation to allow me to use the parking spaces reserved for people with physical problems, whether they be wheelchair bound or, as in my case, have severe breathing difficulties. When I started to make use of the permit, I was amazed and appalled, not by those people who park in these

spaces illegally since I expect that to happen, but by the unthinking individuals who use the spaces to dump their shopping carts. They are too lazy to walk the extra distance to put their carts in the area set aside for that purpose. The two worst locations for this in Georgetown are beside Loblaw's and Miracle Food Mart. It is extremely frustrating to find the reserved parking spaces inaccessible because of this.

I would also like to point out to anyone who doesn't know it that the Ministry of Transportation recently changed their regulations and no longer issue the special license plates to permit holders. A plastic-coated card is

now used that is placed on the dashboard or attached to the sunvisor of the vehicle that the permit holder is using. If you see someone parking in a handicapped parking space in a vehicle that has a regular license plate, before you give them dirty looks or accuse them of parking illegally, check out the dash or sunvisor. It may save a lot of embarrassment and irritation for all parties. Remember too that not all disabilities are readily visible, and a parking permit is issued by the Ministry of Transportation only after certification of the disability by a medical doctor.

Thank you for your indulgence.
Glenn B. Stratheide,
Georgetown.

Money raised for UNICEF

Dear Editor:

History was made Sept. 29-30, 1990, when Presidents and Prime Ministers from countries around the world came together for the first ever World Summit for Children. UNICEF served as the Secretariat for the Summit.

The UNICEF Mandate is, in essence, the same as when it was originally given: to help protect the lives of children and promote their development. The greater their vulnerability the higher the priority.

We are pleased to report that Georgetown and surrounding district raised \$4,137.20 for this worthy cause, thus enabling UNICEF to carry out some of their many projects.

The following schools and organizations participated in the Hallowe'en program for which many, many thanks.

Park Street Public School \$748.85, Robert Little Public School, Acton \$557.82, Pineview

Public School \$484.75, E.W. Foster Public School, Milton \$480.55, George Kennedy Public School \$357.27, Glen Williams Public School \$426.65, Georgetown District High School \$321.29, Joseph Gibbons Public School \$323.63, Limehouse Public School \$106.87, Georgetown Nursery School \$98.97, St. John's United Church Sunday School \$81.45, J.M. Denyes Public School \$47.10, Harrison Public School \$34.30, Georgetown Public Library \$14.60, A and P Georgetown \$40.68, Misc. \$12.43.

We wish to thank the staff of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, in the Georgetown Market, for their prompt assistance when depositing the UNICEF monies.

We would like to take this opportunity of wishing you all Health, Happiness and Peace in 1991.

Bud and Phyllis Livstone,
Co-Chairmen, UNICEF
Georgetown and District.

Opinion

Canada depends on U.S. financial system

Will recession turn into depression? Will there be a war in the Persian Gulf? Will history repeat itself - or worse? These are the questions that loom large as the new year begins.

History does tend to repeat itself and certain things do get worse. With each major war, for example, more people are killed because of technological advances. Will the same apply to global economic slumps? Will increasingly severe depressions sweep across the world, laying economies - and people's lives - to waste?

Some forecasters think so. William Tehan, a respected New York doomsayer, predicts the coming depression will make the 1930s look like a Sunday picnic. He has sound reasons for his dark forecast: the explosion of credit

backed by nothing but the good will of the American government. The same can be said of Canada.

SCARY THESIS

The core of Mr. Tehan's thesis is this: when the United States abandoned the gold standard, money, which to him is synonymous with credit, had no underlying value. The prosperity of the 1970s and 1980s was false, built on the principle of leverage - borrowing against a small capital base.

Leverage, sadly, works in reverse. This is what is happening to the U.S. banking system. Instead of growing, it is shrinking. In Mr. Tehan's opinion, the house of cards is about to collapse. Could this happen?

I don't think so. It is not that Mr. Tehan is wrong; quite the opposite. He is right and Alan



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Greenspan knows it. Mr. Greenspan is chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, the American central bank. And he is one scared central banker.

So dangerous is the situation that U.S. policy-makers will do everything in their power to prevent what could turn into a financial meltdown. People elsewhere in the world can only hope they

succeed. If the U.S. financial system collapses, Canada will be dragged down with it.

We would not be innocent bystanders. True, our banks are sounder. But our debt per capita is higher, the economy is less diversified, our market simpler and our cost of production higher.

NOT THE SAME

Frightening as this prospect may be, the similarities with the 1930s are not as great as they are often portrayed. (Mr. Tehan would say the situation today is worse). To properly compare the two periods, one would have to examine arcane money-supply figures, balance of payments, currencies, real interest rates, investment and trade. So far, the experts on the Great Depression are not waving red flags.

Chances are we are not sliding

into another depression. We are merely coming back down to earth after two decades of inflation. We thought inflation was here to stay. Falling prices confuse and frighten us.

Those who bet heavily on a steady rise in prices may have a sick feeling in the pit of their stomach. Others may be more philosophical. The problem is how to adjust without unnecessary suffering. Real estate speculators have been punished. But why should thousands of prudent, hard-working people be thrown out of work because of a reckless few?

This question is weighing heavily on North American policy-makers as the new year begins. Let us hope they have the good sense to recognize the wrong and right it.

Federal bureaucracy continues to grow

OTTAWA - Through most of the 1980s, federal governments waged a relentless, often highly publicized, campaign to control the growth of the massive public service.

The struggle was highlighted by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's 1984 election promise to issue many Ottawa bureaucrats with "pink slips and running shoes." Two years later, Finance Minister Michael Wilson made good on the promise by chopping 15,000 jobs from the federal payroll.

But a Statistics Canada review of federal employment over the last 10 years suggests the government may have to concede defeat in the struggle to contain the bureaucracy. The federal agency reports the public service grew by 0.9 per cent in the past year and is now 8.1 per cent larger than it was in June, 1980.

Statistics Canada, which records government employment levels twice each year, has found that most of the growth occurred in the first half of the decade. And in spite of serious attempts to cut jobs by trimming operations and selling Crown corporations, there was little change in the employment level over the last half.

In June, there were 388,000 people on the government payroll, compared to 384,600 in June, 1989. In the last 10 years, there has been only one year that Statistics Canada recorded an actual drop in government employment. That

was 1987, when Wilson's cuts took effect.

The total annual payroll is now about \$14 billion.

DEFLATE

The latest figures tend to deflate the boast earlier this year in spending plans tabled in Parliament by then Treasury Board president Robert de Cotret. Through seven pages of charts, graphs and text, the spending estimates impress the reader with the government's ability to trim the public service. But after claiming to have scored a clear success in controlling growth, the department cautions that "it is not possible to reconcile" its method of measurement with Statistics Canada's head count.

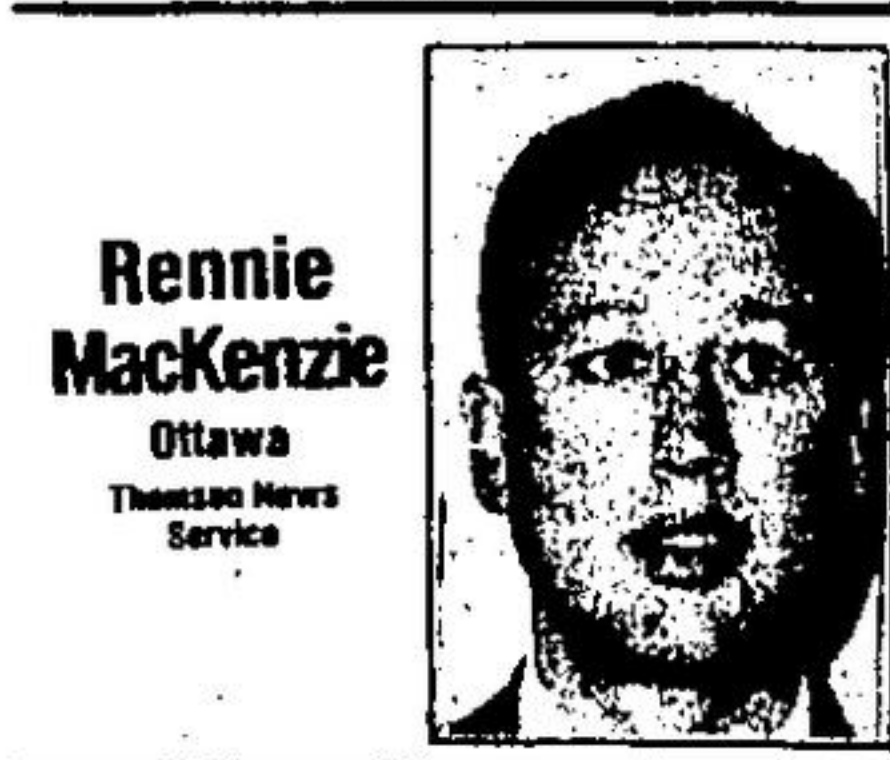
Liberal treasury critic Jim Peterson thinks the government is "masking the real situation."

Peterson suspects permanent employees are being replaced by contracted term and temporary help.

"They must be part-timing everyone," he said.

In fact, Statistics Canada calculates that only three per cent of government employees are part-time, but 15 per cent are now term or temporary. And that has the Public Service Alliance of Canada, which represents about 170,000 civil servants, concerned.

PSAC spokesman Alan Pryde said the government has been replacing permanent employees with contract help. The result is a



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new increase in cost to the taxpayer and a moral problem among employees who see fewer opportunities for transfers and promotion, he said.

"We think the term process has been grossly abused," he commented.

A task force that recently proposed a major overhaul of the bureaucracy came to the same conclusion. To the panel that comprised Public Service 2000, "it was clear that the current uses of term employment go well beyond the initial intention of meeting short-term labor requirements."

REDUCE IMPACT

Peterson said the government is increasing its use of contract, term and temporary help to lessen the impact of expansion in departments such as Employment and Immigration and at Revenue Canada, which has hired 3,900 additional employees to administer the goods and services tax.

The government figures, he said, "are a lot worse than we are led to believe. Their record is dismal."

But while the level of employment in the public service has been creeping up, there have been major reductions in the numbers employed by Crown-owned enterprises.

The number of workers in the federal businesses has been slipping since 1980 - from 234,000 at the start of the decade to 198,000 in 1989. But in the 12-month period ending in June, the number plunged 18.7 per cent to 161,000 after the government sold Air Canada and layoffs at CN Rail, Via Rail and Petro-Canada.

Berry's World



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