

Editorial

From the publisher Gulf crisis

For most adults, we can understand what happened Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m.

For most adults, we understand what is happening in the world and why the United Nations has taken this final step and drawn our nation into war. Prime Minister Mulroney and the members of parliament have made a most difficult decision and committed our armed forces to war. Now it is up to our armed forces as a part of the United Nations to rid the world of Saddam Hussein. What will happen in the next 72 hours or what the future holds is uncertain at this time. But more important, is how this is affecting our families.

Our children watch television with awe when they see a young girl or babies placing a gas mask over their faces to protect them from gas and chemicals. They listen to and read about the possibility of deadly chemical bombs and terrorism at airports. They see Canadians demonstrating for peace and singing songs like "Give Peace A Chance" and yet the bombs are being dropped. Now comes the questions - Will war come to Canada? Will we be bombed? Will terrorism take over the world? The look of confusion, anxiety and fear is real in their eyes. I'm certain in schools throughout Halton on Thursday these and many more questions were being asked of our teachers.

As a parent, take the time to explain to your children what is happening. Maybe you can't really tell them why. But at least take the time to assure them that war as they see it on television or read in the newspapers is a long way off and try and alleviate their fears and anxiety.

To all the service men and women not only in the United States forces but in the Iraqi forces, we hope and pray for a speedy end to this insanity. Above all, we pray that all our young Canadians now embroiled in war will return home safely.

Another sorry page

And so, another sorry page in the recorded history of mankind has been turned with the eruption of hostilities in the Persian Gulf.

The war, which Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had predicted would be "The Mother of all wars" was initiated Wednesday evening, our time, by massive bombing raids conducted by planes of the U.S.-led forces operating under the sanction of the United Nations. As a former member of the Canadian Armed Forces and the son of a former professional soldier in the British Army, I can only wish the United Nations allied troops a heartfelt godspeed.

For the sake of the men and women of the various armed forces I can only hope that the politicians remain in their respective ivory towers and let the military do its job - regardless of the consequences.

Far too many soldiers have lost their lives due either to the incompetence or interference of self-serving politicians. My suggestion to the politicians, of various stripes, "If you want to get involved, grab a rifle. Otherwise, stay the hell out."

Having vented my spleen, in this regard, I also echo the feelings of The Halton Hills Herald's publisher, Bob Malcolmson, on yet another side effect of the Persian Gulf War - the possible traumatic impact it might have on our children.

When news of the air strikes over Iraq and Kuwait first came over the radio, I was in the process of making supper for two young girls whom I was babysitting for a friend.

I must admit I froze for a time, because the next thing I remember was the nine-year-old tugging at my arm asking "What's wrong?" as her seven-year-old sister hovered nearby.

For lack of anything better to say to explain my odd behavior, I simply offered, "We're in a war and a lot of people are going to die."

In response to which the seven-year-old demanded, "Yeah, okay. But can we still have supper?"

Editor's
Notebook
by
Colin Gibson



Out of the mouths of babes, as the saying goes.

At that point I turned on the television, switched to CNN and promptly completed supper preparations.

As we ate, and with the television barking out reports in the background, I attempted to explain to the two young girls just what the Persian Gulf war was all about.

Surprisingly, they were already aware that trouble had been brewing in the Middle East and the nine-year-old was quick to ask, "So who is on our team, Colin?"

With supper out of the way, I sat down to watch the television and it seemed the girls could sense I was somewhat troubled and concerned about what was unfolding in the Middle East.

I couldn't help but think about the children in Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia who were caught in the middle of the conflict. Their world has quite literally been turned upside down and there is nowhere they can run for safety.

Parents, even teachers, should take the time to attempt to explain to children not only what is happening in the Middle East, but also why it is happening.

More importantly, they should also attempt to explain to our children that despite the carnage, hopefully lessons will be learned so that we might someday have a more peaceful and safer world for everyone.

This must be viewed as the only justification for the Persian Gulf war.

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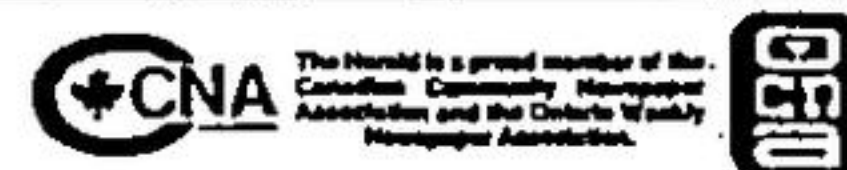
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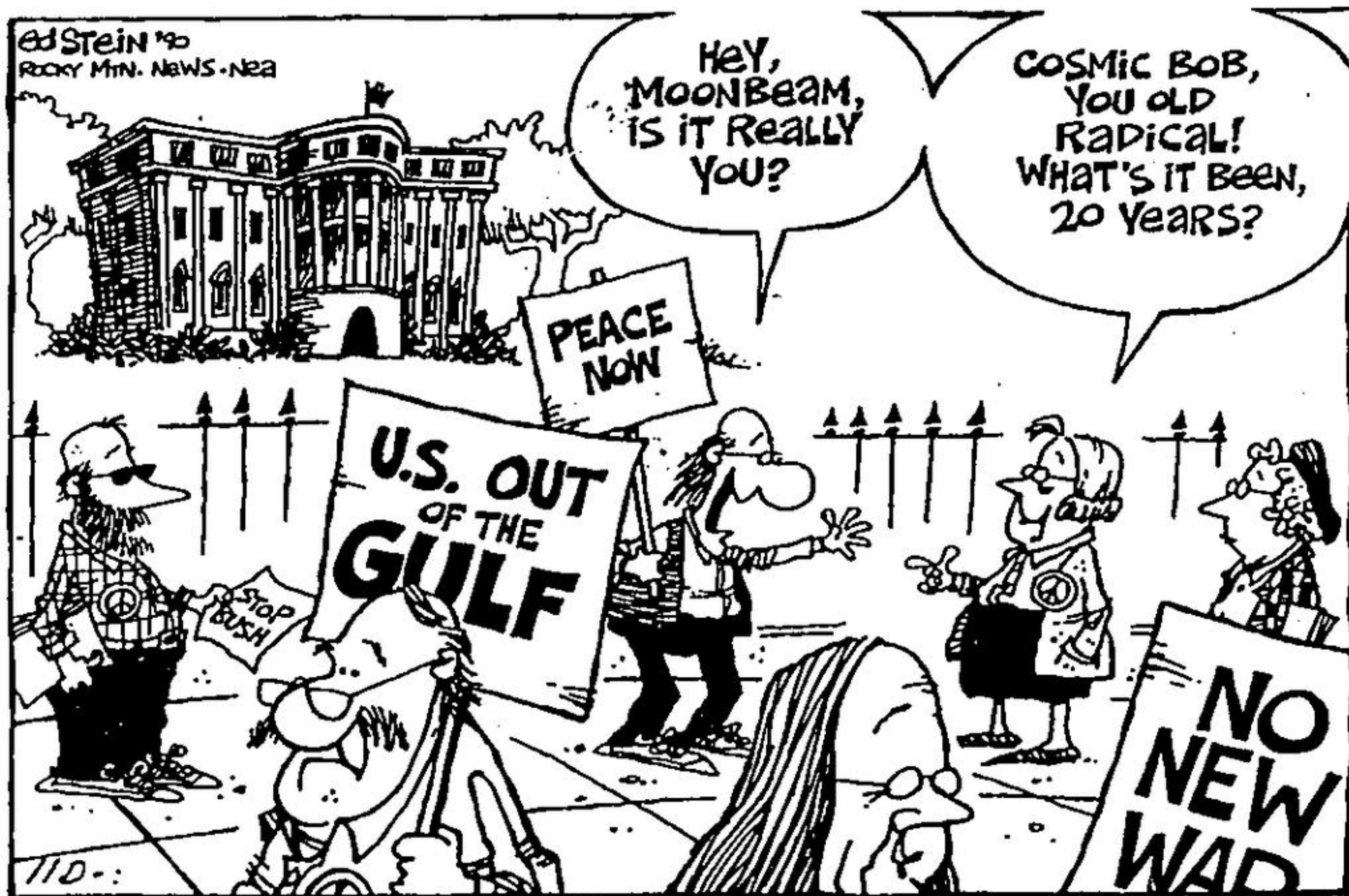
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Adjusting to the GST

It's amazing how one small shift in attitude can improve your whole sense of well-being.

Personally, I've been ever so much happier ever since I realized how much I like the GST.

Admittedly, I may be in a bit of a minority, here. Somehow or other, the GST hasn't had the desired effect on Canadians as a whole - to reassure them that the nation is in excellent hands, and remind them that Michael Wilson is their friend.

Indeed, we're told the GST is actually provoking citizens to acts of resistance. This is astonishing in a country as mild-mannered as Canada, where "tax revolt" has traditionally been defined as refusing to send Revenue Canada a Christmas card.

But just the other day, the papers informed us of a Vancouver man who refused to pay a restaurateur the GST on his breakfast.

Granted, this may not quite compare with dumping boatloads of tea into Boston harbor and starting a war with King George. But it's certainly more radical than a grumpy letter to the editor.

Still, I'm puzzled and dismayed by the reaction.

Just for starters, Canadians have always liked paying taxes. If you don't believe this, just ask the government.

And indeed, there are good reasons for liking taxes. Without taxes, we couldn't pay for social programs, environmental programs, or our eight new Tory senators.

Weir's
World
by
Ian Weir
Thomson News
Service



True, Canadians have always claimed to prefer Progressive Taxes - a Progressive Tax being defined as one that's paid by someone else. But this is a minor quibble.

The fact remains that paying taxes makes us feel warm and responsible, and it builds our character. And heaven knows we could use a few new taxes, just to guard against the possibility that we might lose some of the ones we already have.

Income Tax, don't forget, was introduced as a strictly interim measure following the First World War. And who knows when the government might snatch it away from us?

As such, it's distressing to see Canadians turning against the GST, of all taxes. It's such a nice tax.

I began to realize this upon discovering that I have to charge GST on each piece of writing I sell. The government is actually defining the things I write as "goods."

This is wonderfully heartening.

in a world in which so many others define them as "mediocres."

I began to like the tax even more when I discovered I didn't have a clue how it would affect certain of my long-term contracts, and phoned the GST information office for clarification. It turns out they don't have a clue either.

This was a revelation. For the first time, my government and I had something deep and fundamental in common.

From here, it was but a short step toward perceiving the many other beauties of the GST.

For instance, numerous commentators have advised us that the GST is a quagmire of complexity and confusion that could only have been dreamed up by bureaucrats.

Excellent. Society is already menaced by the creeping, insidious belief that government initiatives ought to make sense. And this, of course, just strips them of their reassuring aura of holy mystery.

But best of all is the simple fact: Mr. Wilson assures us that the GST, despite raising billions of dollars, is something called "revenue neutral." It won't reduce the deficit one bit.

Well, hallelujah. The government may have destroyed VIA Rail. They may be salvaging the CBC. They may already have set their sights on Medicare. But the deficit is sacrosanct.

At long last, they've identified a national institution they have no intention of attacking.

Gee, you gotta love these guys.