

Editorial

Who to believe?

Is it too much to ask that the 'powers-that-be' - those supposedly in the know - tell the truth to Canadians for a change?

We are mired in a recession, the likes of which has not been experienced since the early 1980's and all signs point to things getting much worse before there is even a hint of better times.

But the man responsible for the 'made in Canada' recession, federal Finance Minister Michael Wilson, still insists he sees a light at the end of the tunnel. I beg to differ, Mr. Wilson. The light you see isn't a glimmer of hope, rather the light of a runaway locomotive and it is doubtful it can be derailed before it runs over what is left of the Canadian economy.

At a speech to a joint meeting of the Empire Club and the Canadian Club last Tuesday in Toronto, Mr. Wilson claimed that Canadian workers, demanding big pay increases, are holding back the Canadian economy.

Mr. Wilson was quoted as saying to those in attendance, "The competitive position of Canadian manufacturers has been slipping because we've seen an increase in unit labor costs in Canada, driven by higher inflation here than in the United States."

Mr. Wilson was also quoted as saying, in justifying his recent austerity budget, "What we're trying to do with this budget is break a cycle of wage and salary settlements that are two, three per cent - sometimes more - higher than inflation. We simply can't afford that as governments or as a country."

Mr. Wilson dismissed the January inflation rate of 6.8 per cent as a "temporary blip" and maintained his goal of three per cent inflation by next year and two per cent by 1995 could still realistically be reached.

Mr. Wilson would be well-advised to check with other federal government departments before attempting to blame Canada's economic woes on the working man.

In reference to the January inflation rate, Mr. Wilson was quoted as saying, "The underlying rate up to that time had been between four and 4.5 per cent."

According to Statistics Canada, a branch of the federal government, workers in Ontario received

"As I See It"

by Colin Gibson



ed pay hikes of 5.5 per cent in 1990.

Now I'm no financial genius, but the difference between Mr. Wilson's admitted inflation rate of between four and 4.5 per cent and the 5.5 per cent wage hike Ontario workers received last year, certainly doesn't back up his claim of wage and salary settlements that are "two, three per cent - sometimes more - higher than inflation," as a cause for our economic problems.

Statistics Canada also reported that employment in the province fell five per cent last year, with the total number of people working in Ontario down to 3.98 million, from 4.1 million of a year ago.

Another report from Statistics Canada warns that the worst of the recession is still to come, again, contrary to what Mr. Wilson predicts.

The leading economic indicator, a compilation of 10 key statistics from retail sales to stock market prices, fell by 0.6 per cent in December, the 11th straight monthly drop.

"There's no sign of a turnaround," agency analyst, Phillip Cross, is quoted as saying.

So who do we believe? Mr. Wilson, who refused to even admit we were in a recession long after it became self-evident, or Statistics Canada, whose job it is to study and report on such issues on the basis of providing a service to Canadians.

The point is, Canadians shouldn't have to decide who to believe when information is forthcoming from the federal government.

The least these guys could do is get their acts together. As I see it, anyway.

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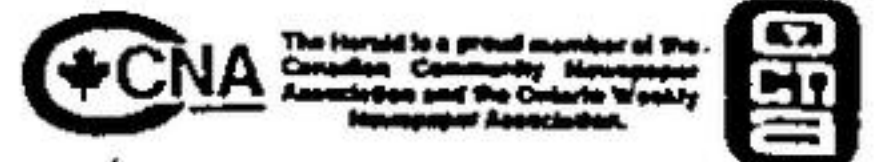
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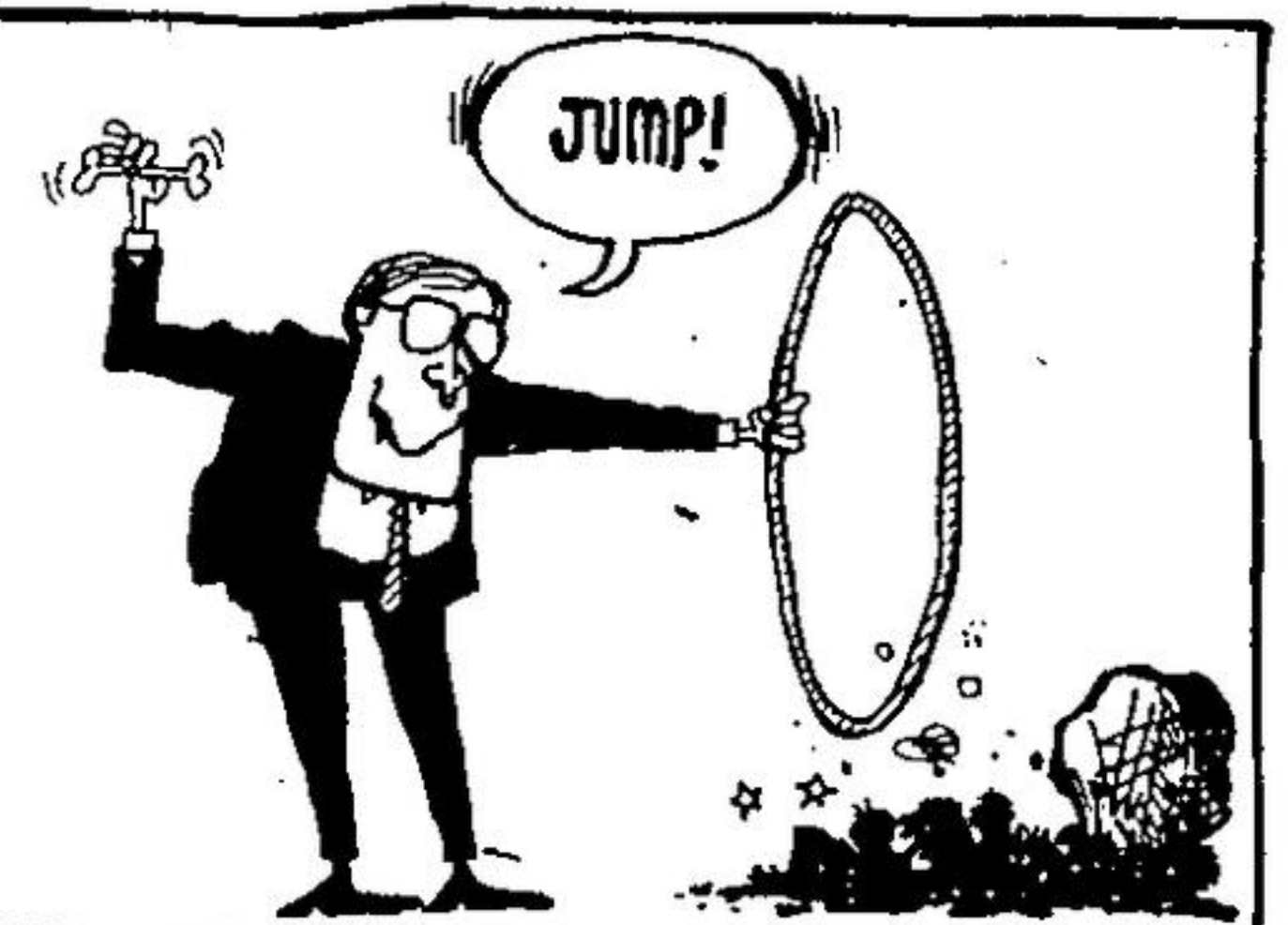
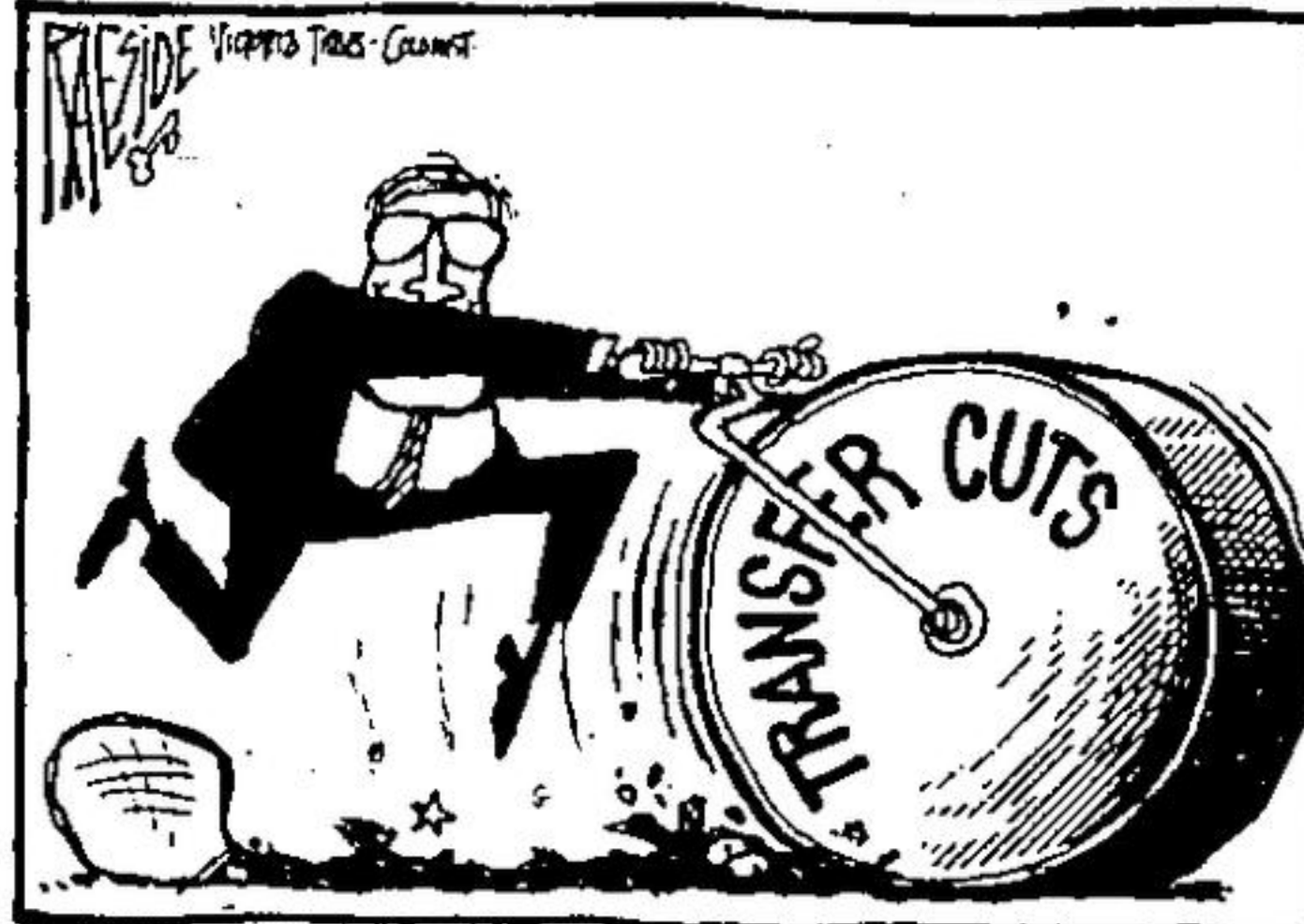
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Medical studies questioned

Do you ever read the results of a medical or psychological study and ask yourself: Why on earth did some nitwit conduct this study in the first place?

I had such an experience the other day, when I picked up the paper and read that a study conducted by Men's Health magazine has determined that men who do housework are healthier than men who don't.

Naturally I hurried straight to share this with The Love of My Life.

"Listen to this," I chortled. "Some magazine actually thinks men need to do housework to stay healthy!"

She gave me That Certain Look. "Exactly," she said darkly. "Go clean the bathroom."

I took her point, of course. Indeed, I quickly realized that this magazine study was precisely the sort of subject I should avoid discussing, let alone writing a column about.

When you broach such a subject, you run the terrible risk of making a remark - some off-hand, well-intentioned little witticism - that smacks of sexism. And a man of the 1990s does not want to do this.

This is partly because he is enlightened, liberal and sensitive. And mainly because the experiences of the past 20 years have intimidated the daylight out of him.

Still, how can you possibly ignore a study that links health to housework?

Unfortunately, the article in the paper didn't specify just how housework contributes to better health and longer life. Perhaps it has something to do with the aerobic value of vacuuming - in which case we'll soon be seeing ads for Jane Fonda's Clean-Up Video.

Weir's World
by Ian Weir
Thomson News Service



On the other hand, it's possible the study found a high incidence of ill-health and shortened life-spans among bachelors who live alone and who thus take the customary single male's approach to housecleaning. If so, we may be dealing with the phenomenon of hitherto-unknown health hazards - says perhaps the possibility that undisturbed dust-bunnies eventually become toxic.

But all of this, of course, merely points to the much deeper issue. We live in an era in which most men agree they should share the housework 50-50.

So the question remains: why don't they?

Personally, I've always wondered whether some deep, dark genetic trait might be responsible for frustrating men in their earnest endeavors to do more housework. Something like bone-laziness, perhaps.

It's also possible that this theory of equality of housework -

like so many other fine theories - begins to lose a bit of its lustre when the time comes for practical application.

After all, the history of science is full of glorious ideas that didn't quite make it off the drawing board. Or as it happens, the ironing board.

It's also possible that men shirk housework out of sheer chivalry. According to this theory, males have always known subconsciously that housework is the key to health and long life.

As such, leaving it to women is an act of pure self-sacrifice. Which, like so many such acts, is so seldom properly understood.

But my personal suspicion is that men are incapable of equal housework because we're the helpless victims of our evolutionary background. Men are descended from prehistoric forebears who chose to go out hunting sabre-toothed tigers while their wives stayed safely at home.

This, of course, raises the troubling question: why would any man with an ounce of sense choose to hunt sabre-toothed tigers when he could choose to stay inside and sweep the cave instead?

But when you think about it, this explains the host of psychological problems that afflict men in the modern era - and surely excuses all of our inadequacies.

Unfortunately, we're descended from a bunch of geeks.

Write us a letter!

The Herald wants to hear from you. If you have an opinion you want to express or a comment to make, send us a letter or drop by the office. Our address is 45 Guelph Street, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 3Z6.

All letters must be signed. Please include your address and telephone number for verification.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters due to space limitations.

Poets' Corner

LOVER'S WALK

Winter evening
Snow
Glistening under the frail
Glow of the moon
Dim street lights
cast silver halos
Two lover's walk
in the lightly falling snow
hands linked,
Then,
Silently,
looking into each other's eyes,
lingering
in a door way,
they steal
A
Kiss.

Jason Piper, Acton.

continuity
love
only frilly lingerie in
display cases.

The only function they can be
guaranteed
to fulfil with absolute efficiency
is bursting bubbles.

By J.B., Acton.

LADIES, BEWARE!

There once was a married
man, Stan.
Whose wife bitched, as only
wives can,
"You don't treat me right.
Get out of my sight.
Or I'll hit you with this
frying pan."

Poor Stanly, a mouse not
a man,
Jumped up off the couch,
and ran.
He wife was quite sad.
He wasn't that bad.
So getting him back was
her plan.

But much to her dismay
she found,
Of Stanly, not any sight
or sound.

So, ladies, beware!
You must show you care.
There aren't many good
men around!

By J.B., Acton.

PIN-PRICKS

Straight, steel pins hold
things together
quite well,
on a temporary basis.
But they lack a safety catch.
They are liable to slip
at any given moment,
and to fail in their function of
unification.
They are incapable of resisting
magnetism.
They're not strong enough
to be used to hang heavy
objects:
responsibility
commitment