

Editorial

Touchy subject

Viewed in terms of an exercise in public relations or even as a Canadian flag-waving junket, our steamed Prime Minister's Far East foray might best be described as an unmitigated disaster.

Not only did 'Baffle Baloney' (as he is referred to in increasingly larger circles) raise the ire of Ontario Premier Bob Rae by somehow insinuating Ontario's deficit into the proceedings, but by playing partisan politics on an international stage, he also insulted Canadians, who would prefer not having their dirty laundry aired in public.

Once again, good old B.M. led with his jaw, while his brain was in reverse.

He also insulted his hosts in both Hong Kong and Japan, by assuming he knew of their concerns, and went public with them, leaving his hosts in the embarrassing position of having to cover-up for our Prime Minister's own faux-pas.

What a man. Write your memoirs, Brian, I've got a minute to spare to read your life story.

One item of significance did emerge from the trip and that was the apology issued by Japanese Prime Minister, Toshiki Kaifu, for the abuse Canadian Prisoners of War suffered at the hands of the Japanese during World War II.

In his official apology, the Japanese Prime Minister said; "We have shown our contrition, we feel very rigorously contrite ... I express my apologies for the unbearable sufferings and the pains that were caused by the Japanese state against the Canadian people who experienced such sufferings in the Asian Pacific at the hands of the Japanese state."

Not good enough. "It's just empty words," said Cliff Chadderton, head of the Canadian War Amputations and a World War II veteran.

His feelings were echoed by John Stroud, a former prisoner and national president of the Hong Kong Veterans Association, representing approximately 700 surviving POW's.

"It's easy to say you're sorry but what did they say about compensation?" Mr. Stroud is quoted as saying upon hearing of the Japanese Prime Minister's apology.

Mr. Stroud was referring to the suit Mr. Chadderton has taken before the United Nations demanding the Japanese government pay a lump sum payment of \$20,000 to the surviving ex-POW's

"As I See It"

by Colin Gibson



or to the families of former POW's now deceased, as compensation for mistreatment suffered at the hands of their Japanese captors.

Difficult as it might be for me to write this, I don't know if I'm in total agreement with their cause.

The issue is also a personal one for me, as my father was interred for three years by the Japanese and presently resides in the Veterans Hospital in London.

I have discussed the issue of compensation with him before and he waves it off with a shake of his head.

"I was a professional soldier," he has stated. "The Japs took me prisoner, just as we had taken them prisoner when we caught up with them. In wartime, there are no rules. It's survival of the fittest. Let what's in the past remain in the past."

As the son of a former Japanese POW, I have seen the scars, both physical and mental, my father bears because of his mistreatment at the hands of the Japanese.

I have also helped him through frightening flashback incidents and terrors still lurking in his mind. But what amount of money will bring back his lost youth, his comrades, his sense of comfort with the world. No amount ever will.

Strangely enough, my father has never expressed hatred for the Japanese. "They were doing their job," he notes.

Values and value systems go by the board in wartime, as the recent Gulf War helped to emphasize.

In a similar vein, it seems to me, when you put a dollar value on a man, or woman's death, it somehow demeans the sacrifice.

That the Japanese mistreated prisoners, there is no doubt.

Official acknowledgement of this fact, is now on record.

Is there really any need for monetary compensation?

I think not.
As I see it, anyway.

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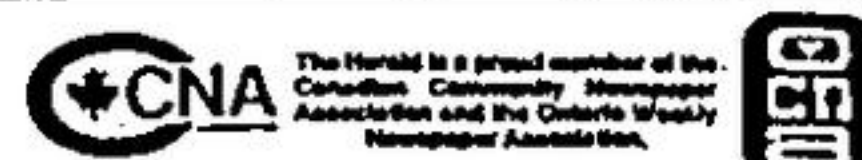
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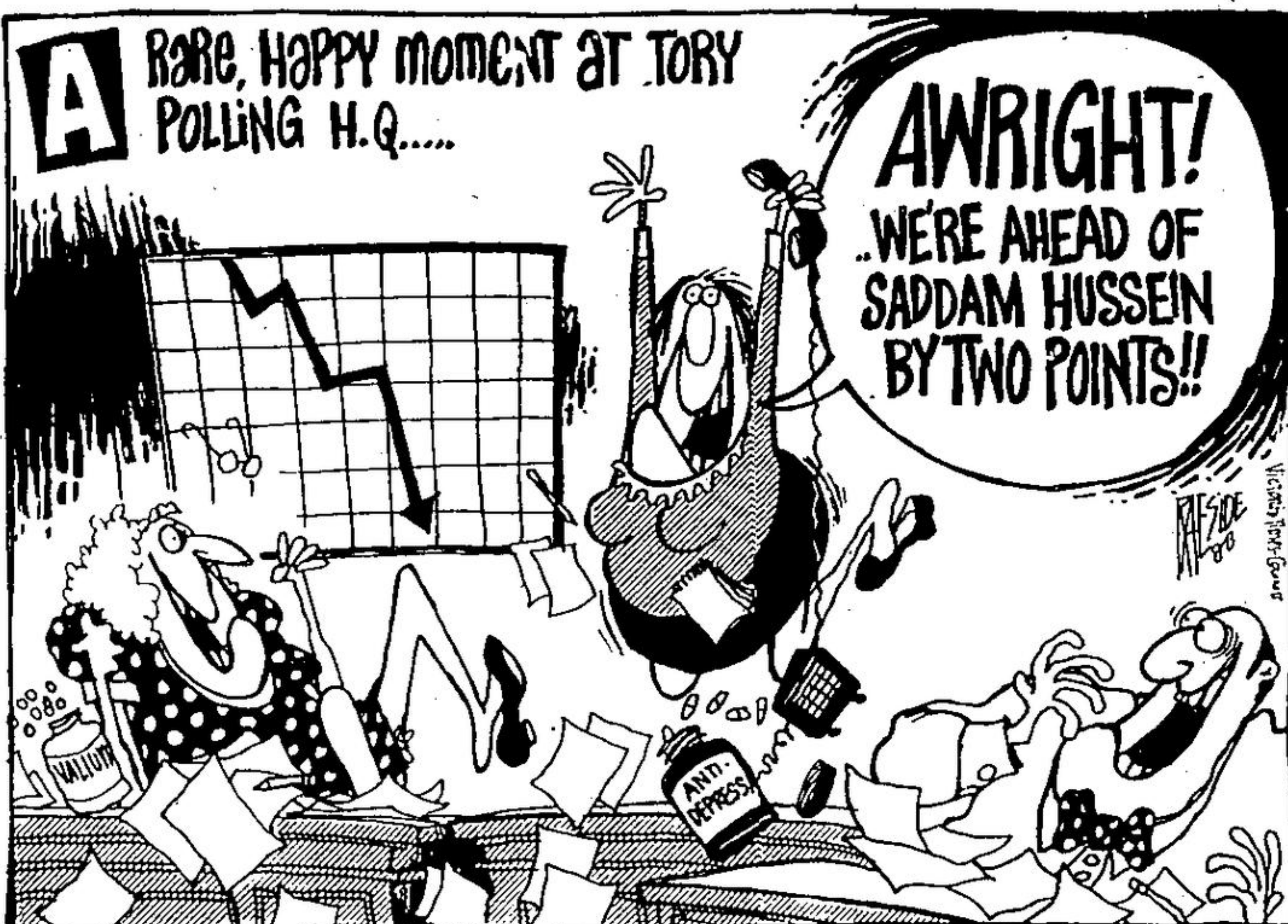
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Monarchists to the forefront

It all came to a head one day last week.

First, Toronto's National Newspaper ran an opinion piece suggesting Canada cut its ties with the monarchy. Then Stephen Lewis said the same thing on Morningside. And then British MP Tony Benn tabled a parliamentary bill calling for the monarchy's outright abolition.

Well, in the face of such outrage, there was just one thing to say. So I said it.

"Jeeves," I said gravely. "Go down to the stables, and fetch the horse whip."

Still, the point must be made. It's time for those of us who remain staunch monarchists to stand up and state our position clearly.

We are not amused. Now granted, the monarch is not a perfect institution. History teaches us that.

After all, monarchs are human. For every Alfred the Great in English history, there was at least one Ethelred the Unready.

Ethelred won his nickname because he was invariably useless in a crisis - a trait which is of course utterly unknown among modern, democratically elected leaders.

Monarchs always had the unfortunate habit of enraging the peasantry with new and ridiculous taxes - another tendency which has been rectified in 1991.

But the monarchy has a lot of accomplishments to its credit, too. For hundreds of years, for instance, kings and queens had a proud history of responding to fiscal crises by locking the Chancellor of the Exchequer up in the Tower of London.

Think about it. It has poetry. And it's such an appealing alternative to raising the bank rate.

Weir's World
by Ian Weir
Thomson News Service



Admittedly, part of my attachment to the monarchy is purely sentimental. I've always been in love with the romance and grandeur of British history.

Think of Queen Victoria, and her famous wedding-night advice to a young niece who had been pressured into a political marriage: "Close your eyes, and think of England."

Granted, we can hear pale echoes of this sort of thing today. Brian Mulroney, for instance, has recently decided to address the problem of Western alienation, which suggests some aide or other advised him: "Close your eyes, and think of Preston Manning."

But it's not the same, somehow. I don't buy the argument that the monarchy is irrelevant to

contemporary Canada, or even that it serves no practical purpose. In fact, if you really want to know the truth, my only complaint is that the modern monarchy doesn't have enough power.

I don't like to sound unkind. But put it this way. Who would you honestly choose to lead the country if the choices were: a) any current politician, b) Queen Elizabeth, or c) Donald Duck?

Oh, a few rabid republicans might vote Duck. Both otherwise, it'd be a landslide.

Indeed, the sad powerlessness of the monarchy was illustrated by Her Majesty's response to the bill recently introduced by the scoundrel Benn.

According to news reports, Benn sent a copy of the bill to Buckingham Palace, and Her Majesty sent him back a "very courteous acknowledgement" of its receipt.

Just imagine if someone had sent Elizabeth the First such a bill, back in the Sixteenth Century. She'd have been able to send back a very courteous letter, stating:

"Her majesty acknowledges receipt, and courteously invites the author of the bill to meet with her at the Tower.

"P.S. The author is advised not to bring his hat, since he will not be needing one much longer."

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

IT'S A LIVING

I remember when I was writing
he said
she stopped listening
she knew that story already
he might as well have said
when I was drinking or
when I was a junky
writing is a similar addiction
an expensive one
years ago she gave up saying
I'm a writer
when people asked what she did
for a living
in the real world
nobody ever understands
anything published nah
money hah
no materialistic body in their
right mind
would choose
to be a writer
you don't even have to be good
to be a writer
you don't have to make money
you just have to write
and believe me you have to
so ask me again what I do
to make my living
to make my life
my answer
I'm a writer

By J.B., Acton.

TIMELESS LOVE

I feel 's if I'd know you
In a different time and place -
Your voice sounds so familiar,
And I seem to know your face.
Your arms around me bring
back memories
Of a love we shared together -
Time has somehow passed
us by.
But our love goes on forever.

B. Brooke, Acton.

FRIENDS

In your hands you hold
my happiness
Tho you don't even know.
You think of me with
friendship,
But I passed that long ago.
I cannot share with you the love
I feel for you today -
For if I said "I love you"
I know you'd back away.
I'd rather have you as a friend,
Then have you not at all -
And tho you'll hurt me
in the end,
I'll love you most of all.

B. Brooke, Acton.