

Editorial

A writer's story

Even during my formative years I knew that some day I would be able to make a living as a writer - albeit, a meagre living. Pshaw, you exclaim (look that one up, Bill). Well leave us reconnoitre the past and peer into what possibly could have led me to have such demented thoughts.

I was born in Scotland and the family moved to Canada when I was five-years-old. My first recollection of this glorious country was being unceremoniously dumped into a snowbank in Kirkland Lake while my mom and dad went about the task of setting up our new residence in the 'Great White North.'

I didn't mind the snowbank so much, except for the fact this dog kept wandering by and waving to me with one of his hind legs. I think that was when I wrote my first column in Canada - in the snow. It had something to do with dogs and mercy-killing.

I fell in love with my Grade One teacher who thought I was cute because I used to write her love letters with a Scottish accent.

She had long red hair and must have been about seven-feet-tall. Of course, I was short at that time and kept bumping into her knees.

When I found out she had become engaged, I was furious and broke up our romance, vowing to become a monk because of her infidelity. I wrote her one final note and since I liked french fries, explained that I was so heartbroken I was going to become a chip-monk.

The family moved to Cochrane, I was enrolled in Central Public School, and my budding writing career really took off.

It seemed no matter what I did, I was constantly in the bad books with school authorities. This might have had something to do with the fact that I very rarely opened my own books.

Back in those days, especially in the hinterland, school punishment ranged from standing in the cloakroom (which I didn't mind because then I could snag an early lunch) to writing lines, to getting the strap.

The teachers gave up giving me the strap, so I was constantly writing lines, "I will not ... etc."

I tried using ditto marks (more lines) and ended up writing secret messages, like cryp-

"As I See It"

by Colin Gibson



tographs, which I thought only I could decipher. No such luck. Mr. Matthews was good at cryptographs. He also seemed to enjoy giving me the strap.

On to high school, where creativity was stressed in writing.

"Colin was absent from school yesterday," I would write, "because the family cat came down with a rare disease that is especially dangerous to Grade 9 boys who pass a sleeping cat on the porch. Our cat sleeps on the porch. We are attempting to find another place for the cat to sleep."

My crowning writing venture, before I officially entered the field of journalism, came at University in my Religious Studies course. It was what we termed a 'bird course', taken to fill out first year required credits.

The course was taught by a minister who had a truly philosophic outlook on life, in general, and religion in particular.

At the end of the course we had to write an essay explaining what we had learned during the year and what the course meant to us in life.

My essay was rather short.

I explained I had learned you don't party the night before when you have an 8:30 a.m. class and that by giving me a passing mark I could advance to second year and get on with my education.

Amazingly, he gave me a passing mark.

Some advice to budding writers:

Write what you feel. Be honest about your feelings and this will be reflected in your writing.

Above all, however, watch out for dogs when you are writing in snowbanks.

As I see it, anyway.

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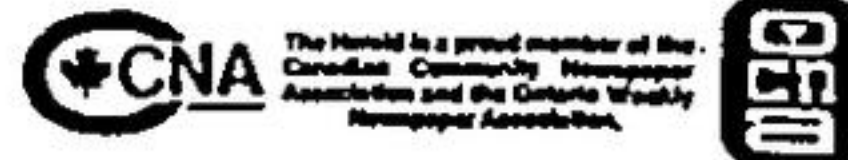
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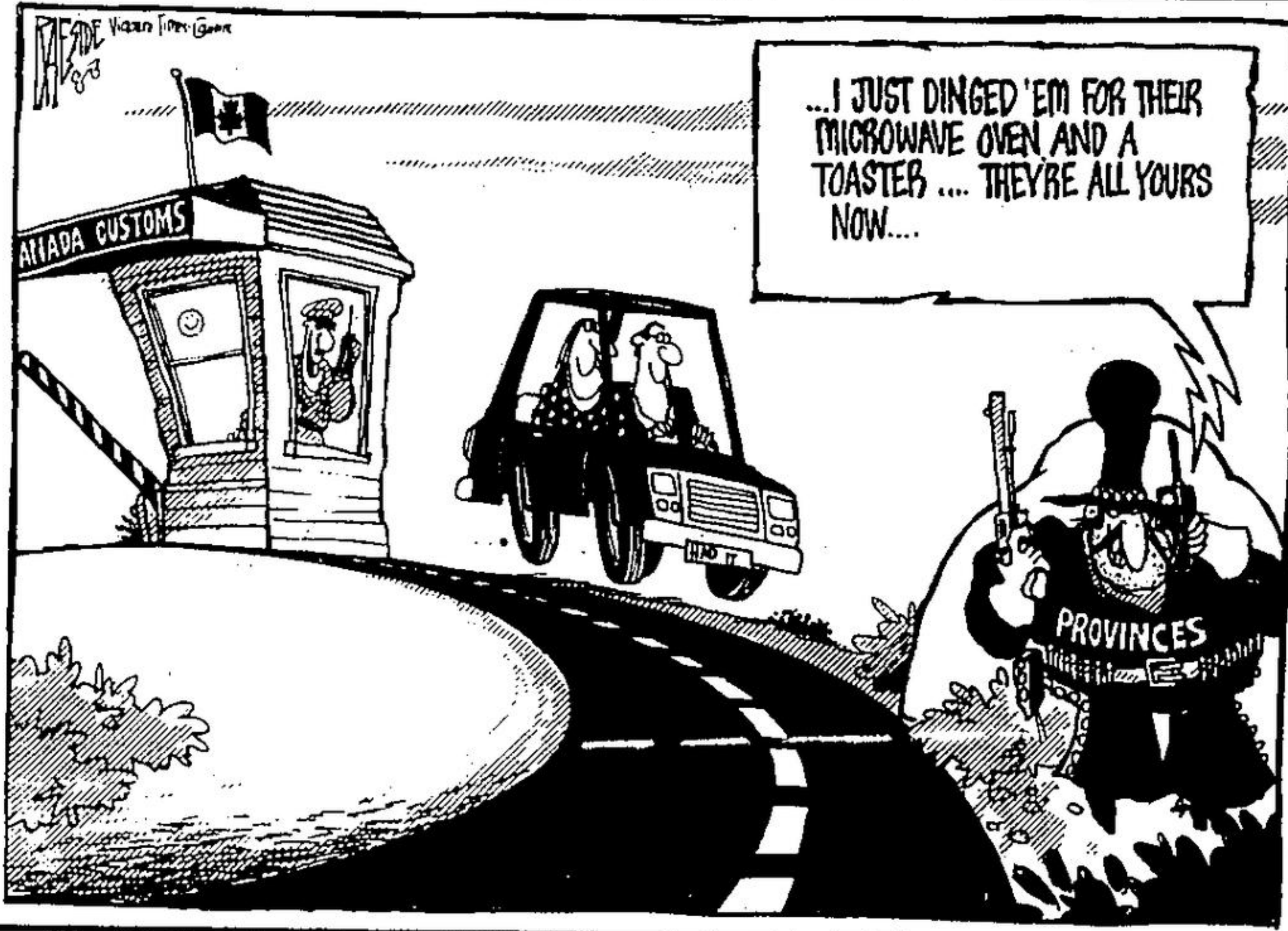
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Tax dollars going to dogs

I don't know about you, but I had a wonderfully warm and fuzzy feeling when I discovered how \$375,000 of our tax dollars are being spent this year.

Apparently, this is the cost of maintaining 10 Revenue Canada dogs in a luxury doghouse and training facility at Rigaud, Que.

Good lord. The government's harshest critics have been right all along.

Our tax dollars really ARE going to the dogs.

This is really quite special, considering that taxation doesn't normally give us much to feel warm and fuzzy about. To tell the truth, this is the first time I've felt either warm or fuzzy since the income tax deadline on April 30.

I don't like to sound like a whiner. But I'm a freelance writer - and the fact is that income tax is even less fun for freelancers than it is for normal people.

If you're a freelancer, your income tax contributions are never deducted at source. Instead, you get to pay the whole shot with one cheque at the end of the taxation year.

This reminds us that the word "freelance" is derived from the Latin roots "fredellum," meaning "poke in the eye," and "lance", meaning "sharpstick".

So I get to go through a ritual every April. I go downtown to the office of my kid brother the accountant, who does my taxes.

Mike tells me gently to sit down and brace myself. Then he flicks some lint from the sleeve of his \$1,000 suit, bums my last cigarette, and breaks the news.

I go home and write my cheque to the government, trying bravely to think: "I am making my contribution to the national debt." This is quickly followed by a more practical thought, which is: "I shall now go stand on a

Weir's World
by Ian Weir
Thomson News Service



street corner and sell pencils."

Oh you try to be philosophical about writing large cheques to the government. You keep trying, even when in the company of friends who are happily cashing their rebate cheques.

But you lapse occasionally, seizing them by the throat and shrieking: "That's my money! Give it back!"

Still, I've been felling much better ever since I read about those revenue Canada dogs and their \$375,000 canine hotel.

Granted, I'm not quite clear on all of the details. For instance, I'm not sure why Revenue Canada needs 10 dogs in Rigaud, Que. in the first place.

Perhaps this is just a humanitarian gesture, based on the belief that Revenue Canada officials NEED dogs - since nobody else is likely to befriend

them. On the other hand, if we allow ourselves to indulge our anti-government paranoia for a moment, we might entertain a much darker and more sinister possibility.

Perhaps this is part of a scheme to put more teeth in the tax laws. Revenue Canada is trying to find a way to cross mild-mannered accountants with fighting dogs, in order to come up with a new breed of Pit Auditor.

But this seems pretty far-fetched. So let's just console ourselves with the thought: in the middle of a recession, the government is spending \$375,000 per year to pamper 10 mutts.

It's the sort of thing that restores your faith - considering that the government might otherwise be tempted to spend the \$375,000 on four new senators.

When you stop to think about it, it might be an excellent idea for the government to hire a lot more dogs.

Just consider. The country's falling apart, the economy is collapsing, and neither the politicians nor their high-priced advisors seem to have a clue what to do.

In such dire times, how much better it might be if the prime minister were able to turn to a truly faithful and resourceful companion and cry: "Lassie! Go get help!"

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

PARADISE LOST

The dust settles swiftly,
as skin begins to rot.
The devil is here now
and heaven is forgot.
They say to each other
"I wonder who was first?"
but does it really matter
for now, we've lost the Earth.

Sean Davis
Acton

YOU WANTED TO BE FREE

I was standing on the corner
Watch'in the world go by
I knew that you could see me
Out of the corner of your eye
But you just kept on walking
Ya took the life out of me.
You just shrugged your
shoulders
And said you wanted to be free.

Greg Smith
Acton

THERE IS NO TIME

This is no time for celebration
This no time for shankin hands
This is no time for back slapin
This no time for marchin bands
This is no time for optimism

This is no time for endless fog
This is no time for my country
Right or wrong remember
what that brought

This is no time for congratula-
tions

This is no time to turn your
back

This is no time for cir-
cumstance

This is no time for learned
speech

This is no time to count your
blessings

This is a time to put up or shut
up

It won't come this way again

This is no time to swallow
anger

This is no time to ignore hate

This is no time to not know who
you are

Self knowledge is a dangerous
thing

This is no time to ignore warn-
ings

This is no time to turn away
and drink or smoke vials of crack

This is a time to take dead aim
and attack

This is no time for saluting
flags

This is no time for political
speech

This is the time for action,
because the futures within reach

This is the time
Because there is no time.

Wayne MacEachen
Acton