

Nissan Micra—another mini alternative

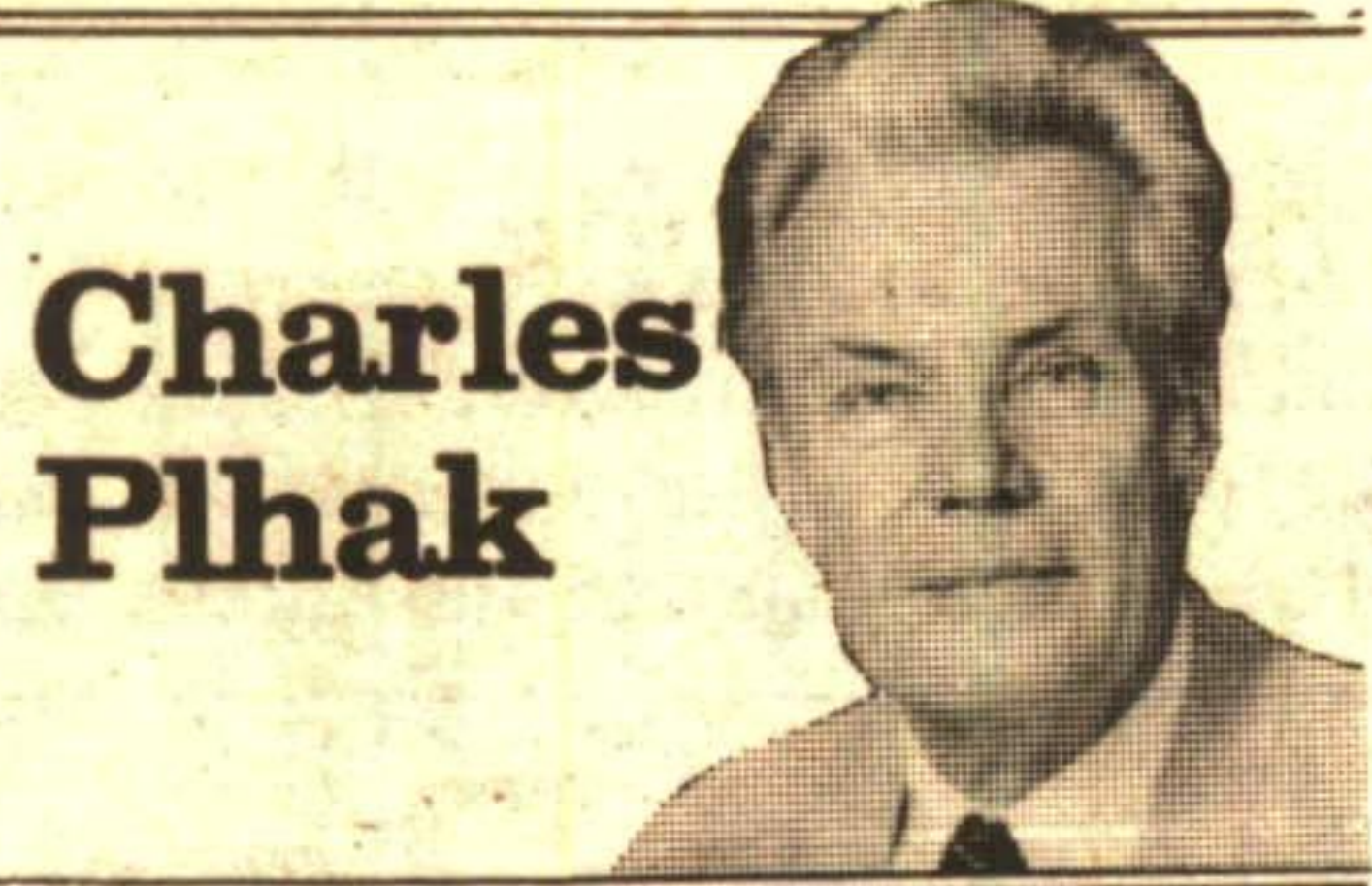
I think I will soon have a nightmare. I will see rows upon rows of mini-cars surrounding me and beeping to remind me that I have yet to road test and report on them.

Having driven and reported on a fair number of them I was struck by both the similarities and differences between the current crop of the subcompact vehicles. It seems they all evolved into basically similar looking front wheel drive miniboxes with similar performance, similar feel and comparable reliability.

The differences are mostly the result of packaging. Variations in standard equipment, models available in various luxury levels and the types of warranty coverage will produce differences in prices. High valuation of the Japanese yen relative to the dollar intended to increase the sticker prices of all Japanese vehicles available in our market place.

89 Nissan Micra has not changed much from last year. It still comes as a three or five door Hatchback in one trim level only.

The three-door model comes with a standard 1.2 liter carbureted OHC four cylinder engine, 5 speed overdrive manual transmission, intermittent wiper, rear glass defroster, rear glass wiper and washer, flip-out rear side windows, Halogen headlamps, cloth and vinyl reclining front bucket seats, folding rear seat-back, rubber floor mats, 12 inch radial tires and a no cost six year or 100,000 kms factory



Charles Plhak

warranty—all for \$8,489.00 plus freight and dealer preparation.

My three door hatchback test vehicle exhibited the sort of general fit and finish one expects from the Japanese products. The seating for the driver and front passenger is generously roomy and supportive. The rear seat is just about what one would expect. Driver visibility is very good and the instruments and controls are reasonably cooperative.

The engine started and ran willingly throughout the test after a brief warm-up. The power train noise was about par on acceleration—moderate at 100 KPH in overdrive. The handling and ride were just about average for the category—brakes were effective and predictable. The ride offered no surprises and the car handled quite well.

I found the performance satisfactory for all normal situations. Operating economy should be very good. Nissan products have established a good record of reliability for themselves in the past and the factory warranty coverage speaks well for the dependability of their 89s.

Car damaged

The passenger window was smashed and the windshield cracked on a 1979 Ford car parked at a Mountainview Rd. S., Georgetown address sometime overnight Tuesday, police report. Damage is estimated at about \$150.

Extension approved

Extension of subdivision draft approval for Tormana Development's 13 home project between Churchill Rd. N, and Acton High School was Monday granted by General Committee. The extension will be good for one full year if approved by council next week.

Town Hall meetings educational

Last Wednesday night, the spirit of democracy burned hot as we had the first Town Hall meeting in this new federal riding of ours. About 60 people crowded a room in Bolton, and we talked about what's right and what needs fixing in this country.

I really enjoyed the session, and look forward to the one slated for this Wednesday (Jan. 25) at the North Halton Golf Club in Georgetown. The week after, the Halton-Peel road show moves on to M.M. Robinson School, in Burlington.

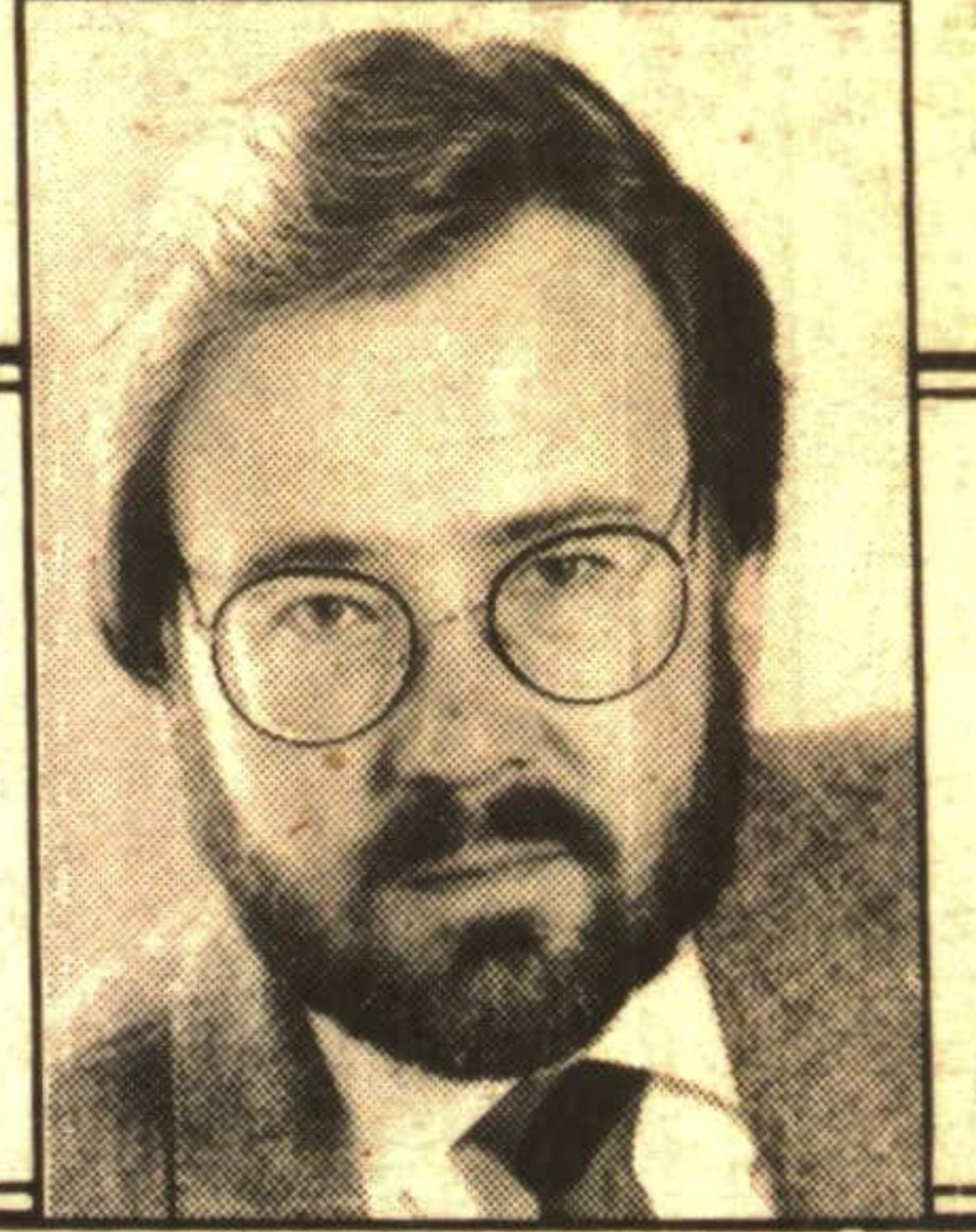
Before last week's event, Dorothy and I were out going door-to-door and then meeting shoppers in the grocery store, letting them know about the meetings. One woman's reaction seemed typical of a lot of people. "Boy," she said, "are you ever brave!"

That worried me a bit, and I suddenly wondered what was going to happen at an evening when the doors were thrown open to anyone to come and ask or tell me anything.

But I survived. Actually, the two-hour session taught me a lot. We talked about the country's economy, about social spending; taxes; immigration; language rights in Quebec; and we even had a show of hands in the audience on who would build and who would scrap nuclear-powered submarines. (The subs won.)

This week's agenda in Georgetown will be pretty close, and I hope that everyone who comes to the second Town Hall meeting is as frank and sincere as the citizens were in Bolton. As I start to think about heading back to Ottawa in a few weeks, this kind of input is invaluable.

A couple of weeks ago in this space I was talking about what I see as one of our greatest problems, and that's the fact we spend 30 per cent more each year than we take in. That shortfall is called the deficit, and last year it was about \$28 billion.



Ottawa report

By GARTH TURNER
MP for Halton-Peel

Each year that we run a deficit, it gets added to the national debt, which is now around \$300 billion.

In that column I said we had two choices to make if the deficit's ever to drop: Cut spending, or raise taxes. And I asked readers if they had any comments for an MP to take to the federal finance minister.

Burlington Mayor Roly Bird was one of the first off the mark.

"Please be assured," he wrote me, "that I fully agree it is clearly time to get the national house in order, and begin to address not only the current annual deficit, but also the accumulated deficit. I am pleased that you will be one MP that will be speaking and working with the finance minister in regard to that."

"As to your question whether people can stomach higher taxes, it is my view that they will have to. Otherwise, the only other way to reduce the deficit is to cut programs and benefits, and this would cause an even greater uproar amongst Canadians."

Of course, not everyone agrees. Our Bolton meeting, for example, was rocked at times by the comments of those who said taxation had already reached the breaking point.

And Chris Gudgeon, of Georgetown, took the time to send me a long letter. It was tinged with more than a little anger—as the father of four with a wife who chooses to stay at home and look after the children.

"Your peers have lost touch with

reality," he told me. "Does some sort of change come over these people once they reach Ottawa? Is there some great book they are shown that forces them to change, or set aside their promises and follow a great, guiding light to the country's downfall? You, of all people, should know the answer to whether we should pay more taxes."

"If you think this country is in bad shape now, try to imagine what it is going to be like when the middle class takes the economy underground, I am sick, sick and tired of paying taxes to this country and in return being asked to pay more."

A lot of people feel that way. And in my other life as a journalist I spent years blasting politicians for mindlessly raising taxes, while ignoring the real burden this was putting on working people.

Nothing's changed. I have not suddenly forgotten after being elected. Taxes hurt—and that can't be the only solution to the problem we have of paying off Canada's mortgage.

But if taxes do have to increase, then they have to do it with protection for those who need it—people who have turned into our working poor, or our working enslaved.

Chris Gudgeon makes me a promise: "I intend to follow your career and make sure that you stick to your promises and principles, even after you have read the great book of stupid government," he writes.

That's okay with me.

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Saturday afternoon 1:30-4:30 p.m.
Sunday morning 9:45-10:45 a.m.

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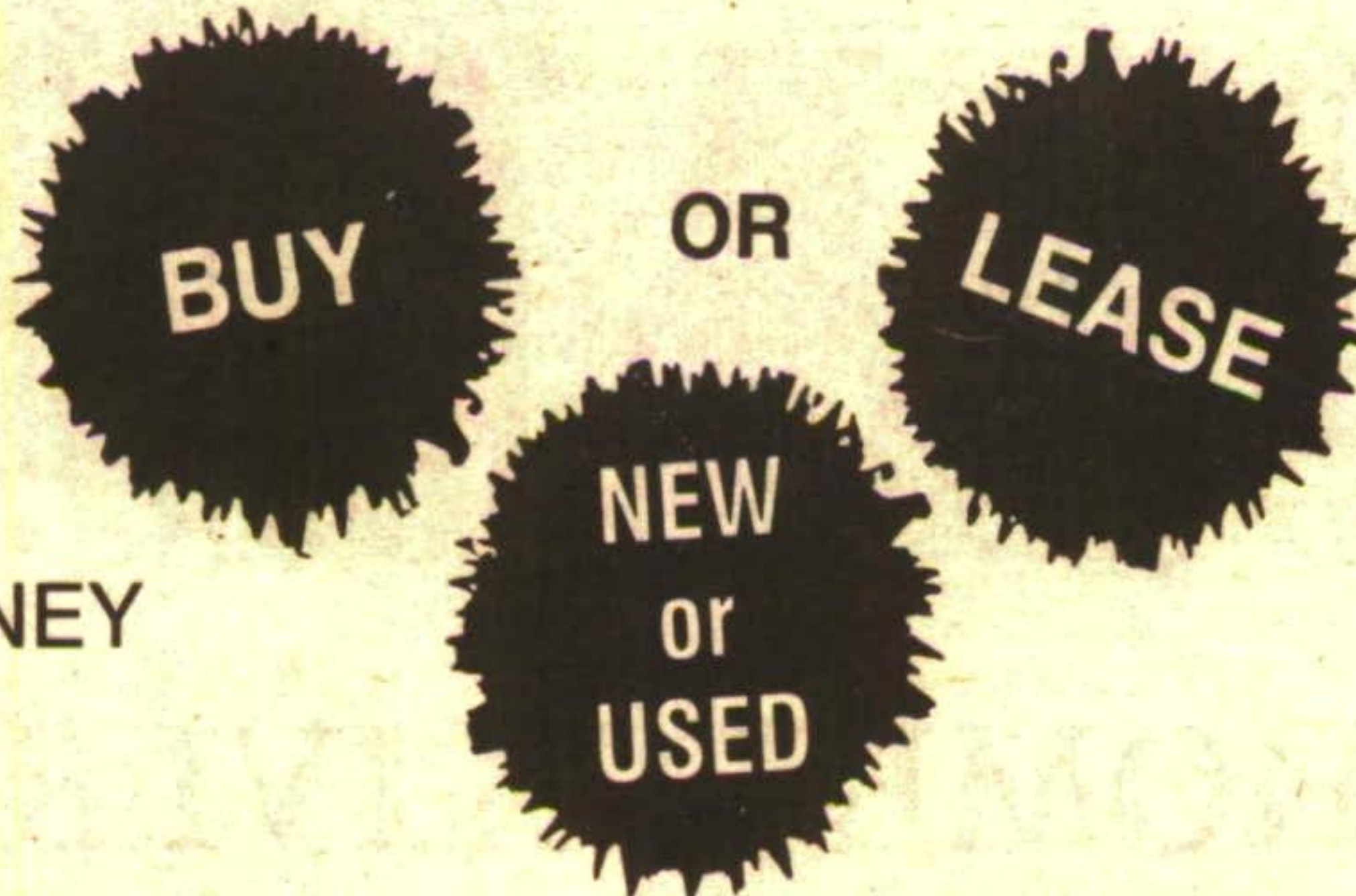
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