

Opinion

Fair tax division?

Is it fair that a single mom in Ontario with two kids pays more in income tax than thousands of profitable corporations? It's a question the New Democratic Party (NDP) is asking and one the federal government does not seem to be answering.

The NDP in a prepared release named five Ontario corporations that in their latest fiscal year earned substantial profits but paid nothing in income tax. They include:

- 1) Brascan Ltd. made a profit of \$174 million in 1987 and received a tax credit of \$500,000.
- 2) Xerox Corporation made a profit of \$64 million in 1987 and received a tax credit of \$2.6 million.
- 3) Tridel Enterprises earned a profit of \$16 million in 1987 and paid no income tax.
- 4) Hees International earned a profit of \$151 million in 1987 and paid no income tax.
- 5) Bramalea Ltd. earned a profit of \$41 million in 1988 and paid no income tax.

Statistics Canada says that for 1986 there were 89,000 corporations in Canada with profits of \$21 billion that paid no income tax. Michael Wilson has admitted that little will change under his new tax reforms, the NDP says.

In Ontario roughly \$7 billion in corporate income goes untaxed while lower and middle income families pay more than their fair share. The Ontario and federal governments paid dividend tax credits to the shareholders of these five companies -- who collectively received over \$200 million in dividends last year -- in order to compensate them for income taxes paid by the corporations.

The New Democrats say corporations that can pay, should pay. That's why Ontario should introduce a Minimum Corporate Income Tax. Such a tax is in place in the U.S.

Oh yes, a single mom with two kids earning \$20,000 paid nearly \$750 in Ontario income tax and \$1,500 in federal income tax last year.

It is obviously not fair. It makes one question the direction we're taking when obviously struggling young families must ante up over \$2,000 each year while comfortable corporations escape and benefit from the misery of others.

Taxes, taxes, taxes...

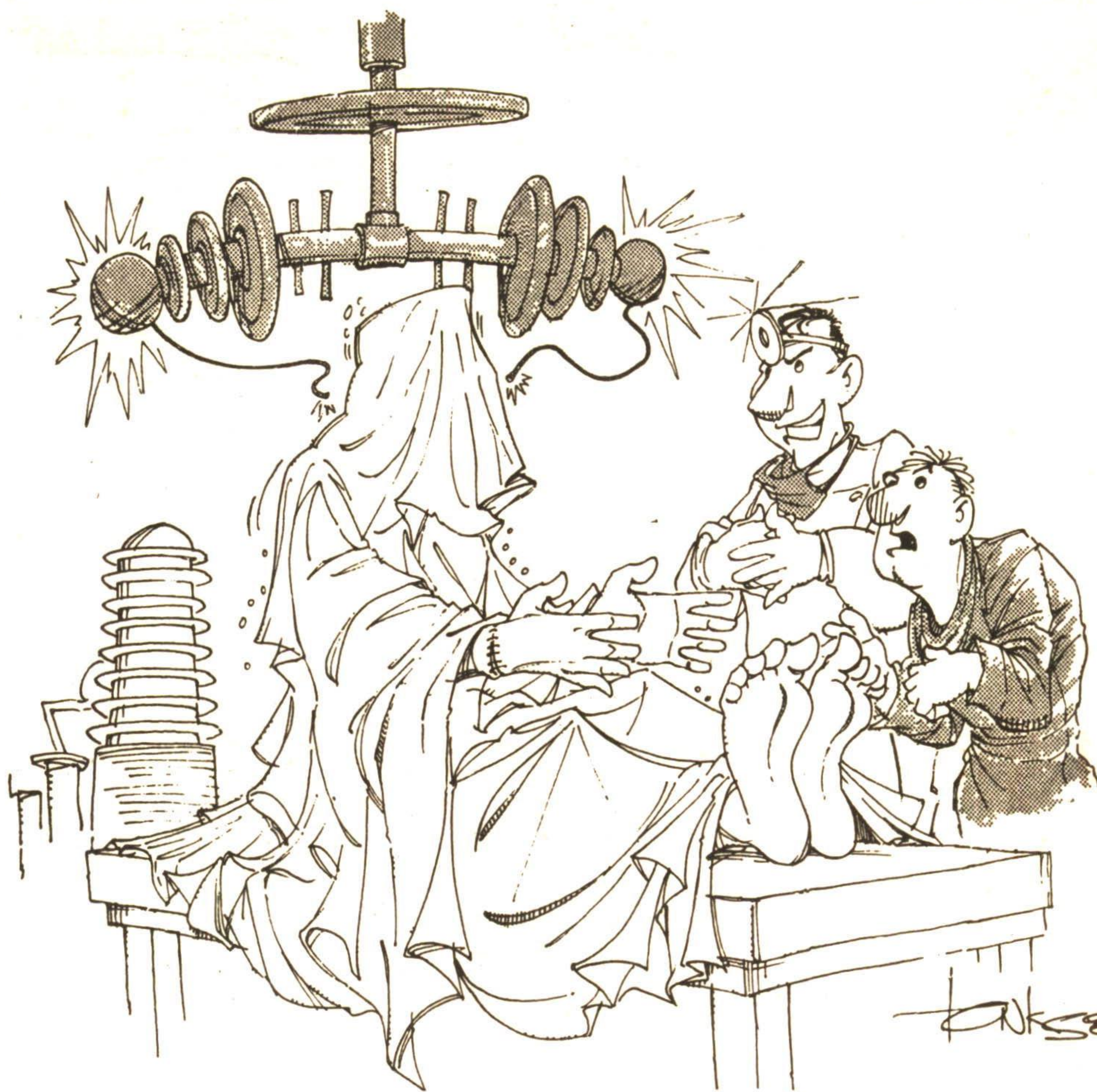
Well, we'd hardly got over the shock of the federal budget, when Ontario Treasurer Bob Nixon took another bite out of our income.

Mr. Nixon struck at income, gasoline and car taxes in his fifth budget as treasurer which will increase provincial revenues by \$1 billion this year. Motorists get saddled with two cents a litre gasoline increase, one cent now and another next January. They'll pay more for driver's licences and registration as well as another \$5 for every new tire beginning June 1.

Treasurers, federal or provincial, seem to delight in penalizing motorists for driving to and from work. It's the user-pay syndrome we hear so much about. It's also an attempt to cut Ontario's deficit.

OHIP premiums will be abolished Jan. 1, beer will cost more, income tax is up one per cent and gas guzzling new cars will be taxes as high as \$3,500.

Coming so quickly on the heels of the federal budget it's hard to digest all the changes Mr. Nixon has in store for us. All we know is that between the province, the federal government, the Town, the board of education and the Region we'll all be paying one heck of a lot more in taxes.



"MASTER! THERES AN ANGRY MOB OUTSIDE THE CASTLE WALLS! THEY CLAIM OUR EXPERIMENTS ARE INTERFERING WITH THEIR ELECTRIC GARAGE DOOR OPENERS!"

Take up your couch and walk

The Canadian Science News Service sends a release over this desk which says middle-aged Canadian men need more exercise. A survey of 10,000 adults by phone showed that men aged 45 to 54 are real couch potatoes, closely followed by men 55 to 64.

"Middle-aged men smoke more, and they are often at a point in their lives where they are experiencing more stress -- two factors that make them more susceptible to disease," says Dr. Thomas Stevens, author of this report.

The report used a scale in which someone who engages in "vigorous exercise" three times a week, with each exercise period lasting at least 15 minutes, is an 'active' person.

'Occasional' exercisers are those who work out 1 to 2 times a week. 'Sedentary' adults exercise less than once a week.

"Vigorous exercise" includes jogging, racquet sports and team sports to dance classes, calisthenics and brisk walking.

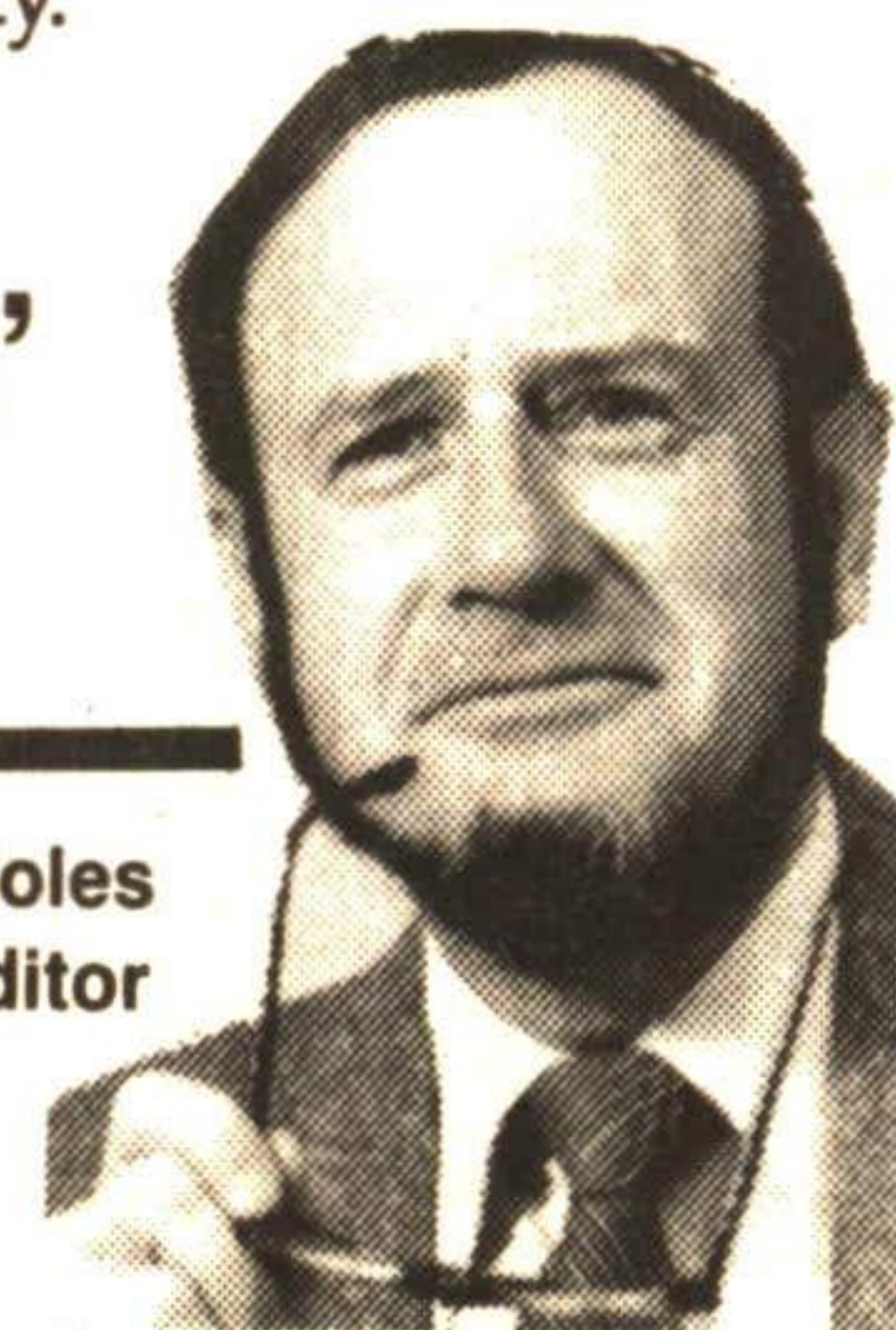
By this definition, slightly over half -- 54 per cent -- of adult Canadians can be described as active exercisers. About one-quarter are sedentary and the balance 18 per cent, are occasional exercisers, says the report.

Canadian men in the age categories 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 fall well below the national average -- only 46 per cent and 47 per cent respectively are regular exercisers.

Stephen says public health educators should change the message being given to middle-aged men. His study shows that many middle-agers switch back and forth between occasional exercise and total inactivity.

Coles' slaw

by Hartley Coles
Managing Editor



Well, as a former couch potato turned brisk walking freak, I can vouch for what Dr. Stevens says.

"You can expect some benefits without moving straight into being a regular exerciser. You don't have to be wearing sweatpants and out of breath. Just getting off the couch is a good move. Even modest activity can do good things for your health," says Dr. Stephens.

It's true. Back before I took medical advice and moved off by butt into Reeboks for three mile hikes I was a sluggard. No energy. No joie de vivre. Just a couch potato with a bent for TV westerns with lots of Indians, sports, and docu-dramas thrown in for variety.

Before anyone suggests that I

haven't changed much, I should mention that my mental state was what I call "droopy." It took a lot of interest in anything beyond the couch and area.

How has brisk walking helped? Most Canadians are unaware of the psychological benefits of exercise. It helps cope with stress, which is one of the negatives of this job and many others.

Number two is physical. You start to lose the "pot" you've been cultivating for years. You can run upstairs and down, chase your wife with hopes of catching her and have some breath left to mow the lawn. It also gets you out in the fresh air.

The third benefit, of course, is weight control. Exercise, especially brisk walking, helps keep your weight down if done regularly. And according to the medical profession it lessens your chances of having a heart attack, developing diabetes and even helps your varicose veins.

Now if they were able to put all these benefits into a pill there'd be line-ups at the drug store to buy them. Because they're free and at almost everyone's finger tips we tend to ignore them and crunch down more comfortably on the couch.

Senior citizens are getting the message, though, Dr. Stephens says the men over 65 are now amongst the most active men in the country with 59 per cent regular exercisers. We could well all emulate them.

HALTON HILLS Week End

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