

Opinion

Cash register cover-up?

By Terry O'Shaughnessy

It seems that the more questions asked about the Goods and Services Tax, the more confusion is created by the so-called simple, fair and workable tax system proposed by federal Finance Minister Michael Wilson.

Recently, another area of confusion was brought to light by John Bulloch, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who is concerned about Canada's retailers as they face the as-yet unharmonized federal/provincial GST at the cash register.

The facts tell the story:

Approximately 450,000 to 500,000 cash registers are currently installed in Canada. Roughly 10 to 15 per cent are computers, while the remaining 85 to 90 per cent are electronic cash registers. Another 200,000 retailers use cash drawers without any sort of electronic or computerized equipment.

Most electronic cash registers in use today can handle two tax systems as long as both taxes are applied on the same number, but they cannot handle two taxes if one tax is applied on the other - the current state of the unharmonized GST.

Changing these electronic cash registers or supplying new equipment would take, according to industry experts, approximately one year after the GST legislation is passed into law and the provinces clarify how they will apply their own tax.

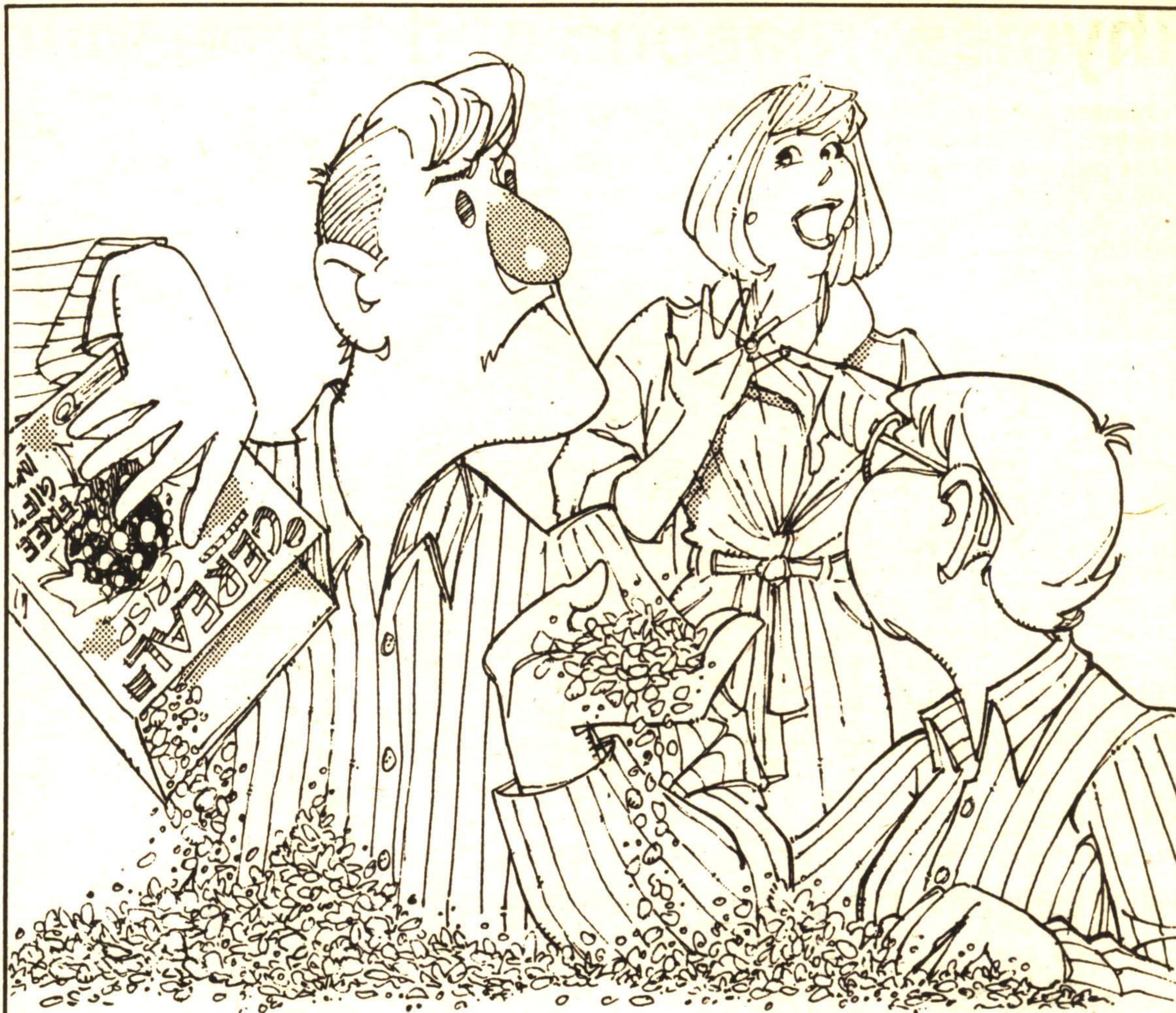
The result will, quite simply, create chaos on a number of fronts. Many retailers will not be able to show the GST on their invoices or cash receipts. Some businesses will price their goods GST-inclusive while others will price their goods GST-exclusive. Some firms will buy new equipment prematurely before the rules are clarified, and others will inadvertently purchase computerized equipment they might not need.

Furthermore, if the GST is harmonized at some point with provincial tax systems, small firms will have spent this money for nothing.

The incredible fact is, says Bulloch, the federal government has known all along about the cash register problem and willfully engaged in a cover-up in order to get the legislation through the House of Commons. In a stinging letter to the finance minister, Bulloch deplored Wilson's unwillingness to meet with CFIB representatives and cash register manufacturers who concur that the GST will create a disaster at the cash register for both small retailers and consumers.

Bulloch says that: "Neither the small business community nor the Canadian consumer has been well-served by your government's misinformation campaign that falsely claims the GST is a simple tax. The lack of honesty only works against the government at a time when Canadians more than ever deserve to be given the truth from those elected to serve them."

-CFIB Feature Service



"... ARE YOU FELLOWS LOOKING FOR THIS?!"

Words Worth

People who make a difference

By ERIC BALKIND

On Wednesday, March 7th, a woman lay dying on a Vancouver crosswalk while rush-hour commuters steered their cars around her without stopping; less than a month before that a violent man in Calgary was urged by onlookers to continue his assault on a woman who was trying frantically to escape him while, again, no one intervened.

Such happenings are the inevitable result of the shortsighted attitude epitomized by those who say "I don't want to get involved" or "I don't want to take any responsibility." By their refusal to aid their fellow citizens in distress such people contribute to a hardening of hearts which is damaging and destructive to all of us.

But there are also people who do care and who are willing to put themselves on the line when help is needed. They are the people who say to themselves "There, but for the Grace of God, go I," and their efforts make the difference.

Early in January, our telephone rang at 3:30 a.m. one Saturday morning and we received the call which all parents must surely fear, "There's been a car accident and your daughters are in hospital."

You cannot know, until it happens, what anguish you feel as you rush to dress and get yourself down to face "whatever." Let me tell you, you are numb, you are in shock and you are afraid, desperately afraid, of what you might find at the end of the trip.

As it happens, there were some nasty injuries but fortunately, thanks to both providence and the human factor, all will be well. The official services - the ambulance, the police and the hospital staff - came through and we are grateful to them but this tale is really about ordinary citizens who also cared enough to help.

In Vancouver, one motorist finally did stop to

render assistance to that dying woman and in Calgary a passerby eventually stepped in and came to the rescue; just outside Acton, a young couple who were first on the scene, stopped immediately and came to the aid of our daughters.

The car laid on its side leaning against a tree and Brian had to get right down below into the snow to comfort an injured, half-frozen young woman. He wrapped blankets around her and prevented her from moving, kept her conscious and talking while, at the same time, he kept an eagle eye on the precariously balanced vehicle lest it fall towards the helpless girl. It was a delicate situation and eventually it took five people to lift that girl safely out.

Tina grabbed the second young woman and kept her warm inside their own vehicle; she hugged the girl and talked to her and even cried with her. From time to time, she checked on the sister who was the more seriously hurt and came back to report; it was what was needed to comfort a shocked girl who thought her sister might be dying.

This couple stopped as soon as they recognized that something was wrong, they cared enough to check and they stayed and helped because they knew it was the right thing to do. In so doing they gave material comfort to two young women who were hurting and they may even have saved one girl's life. Later, they told us quite simply that, if the same thing ever happened to their daughters, they would hope and pray that someone would care enough to stop and assist.

Blessings on Brian and Tina for helping our young people in their time of need; thanks also to them, to a driver in Vancouver and a passerby in Calgary for reminding us that love and compassion are the greatest gifts of the human spirit.

THE GEORGETOWN INDEPENDENT /
THE ACTON FREE PRESS

Week End

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The Georgetown Independent /The Acton Free Press Week End, published every Saturday at 30 Main St. S., Georgetown, Ont., is one of the Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing group of suburban newspapers which includes: The Acton Free Press, Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, The Aurora Banner, Barrie Banner Advance, The Brampton Guardian, The Burlington Post, The Erin-Hillsburgh Echo, The Etobicoke Advertiser/Guardian, The Georgetown Independent, Markham Economist & Sun, The Milton Champion, The Mississauga News, The Newmarket Era, The Oakville Beaver, Oshawa/Whitby This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornhill/Vaughan Liberal, The Rockwood-Eramosa Review, The Scarborough Mirror, The Stouffville Tribune, The Willowdale Mirror. Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing is a division of Harlequin Enterprises Ltd.

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Price: Store copies 50¢ each; subscription \$19 per year by carrier; \$52 per year by mail in Canada; \$75 per year in all other countries.

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