

Opinion

Making the ends justify the means

By TERRY O'SHAUGHNESSY

The question of whether the ends justify the means is an essential ingredient of just about any political position but is of particular significance given the controversial parliamentary battle waged by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the Senate over the proposed Goods and Services Tax.

It is to be hoped that the prime minister at least asked himself this question when, in Machiavellian fashion, he used unprecedented powers to appoint extra Senators to the Liberal-dominated Upper House and gave the Tories a majority. When considering the end—that the lucrative GST would finally pass into law and take effect, as originally planned, on Jan. 1, 1991—no doubt Mulroney was willing to go to any lengths to ensure passage of the legislation. But forcing that passage by embarking on a spree of Senate appointments in order to tip the balance in favor of pro-GST votes made those means politically expensive indeed.

Many Canadians would argue that neither the means nor the end were justified. The frustrating fact of the matter is that the GST debate should never have reached this boiling point.

For more than a year, the public outcry over the tax did not move the federal government to address the many flaws and inequities of the GST. Responding in kind, the Senate opted to go for an outright kill of the legislation instead of making recommendations to amend the legislation, thus guaranteeing the current paralyzing impasse in parliament.

Catherine Swift, Vice-President of Research and Chief Economist of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, says that the Senate could have played a more effective role and delayed implementation of the GST.

"Canadians agree that sales tax reform is a necessity," says Swift, "but the current GST is not the answer. The GST layers the federal sales tax over the provincial sales tax creating all kinds of administrative difficulties for small business and confusion for consumers. In their haste to get their hands on the revenues, the federal government wouldn't wait to harmonize the tax with the provinces and it was this unwillingness to make the tax more workable—and their entrenched position on the Jan. 1, 1991 implementation date—which did much to create the stand-off with the Senate."

Swift quickly points out that the Senate should have adopted a different approach.

"The Senate had a role to play in making constructive suggestions and amendments to the unworkable aspects of the GST legislation. They could have asked the government to delay implementation in order to allow the provinces to harmonize the tax. Instead, the Senators entrenched their position to the point where we see the shameful spectacle of the Tories swamping the Senate and the Senate missing an opportunity to make a harmful tax fairer and less of a burden for consumers and scores of small business owners."

What the hardline positions of both have done is to create yet another crisis to exhaust a country still reeling from a summer of Meech Lake, Oka, and potential war in the Persian gulf. The regrettable fact is that it wasn't even necessary.

CFIB Feature Service

Continuation of the current aging trend will result in a population of about 318,000 seniors needing institutional accommodation by the year 2001, according to Statistics Canada figures. This compares with about 143,000 seniors requiring such care in 1986.

Since the 1970s, the fertility rate has been below the level where population is maintained at a steady level, Statistics Canada figures show. The rate, the average number of births over a woman's lifetime, was 1.7 in 1989.



Three Wise Owls

Our readers write

Taxpayers fed up with school costs

Open letter to the press, Halton trustees:

A 14.57% budget increase from the Halton Board Finance Committee was justified by the trustees in April of 1990, over the objections of many taxpayers. This year *all* trustees will be on the Finance Committee, in an effort to bring in an election budget. (Board Agenda, Thursday, Sept. 27).

Halton taxpayers are beginning to analyse the *real* cost of needless school closures, discarded and neglected facilities, the loss of neighborhood schools, potential re-openings of facilities that should not have been closed in the first place, and finally, the building of new facilities where they cannot be justified.

Declining enrollment forced the closure of Wrigglesworth and Speyside in Georgetown just a few years ago but portables had to be added to Kennedy P. S. Now Wrigglesworth may have to be re-opened, while Speyside sits empty and neglected. Way any money saved? How many lives were disrupted?

Perdue S. S. in Oakville was closed in 1989 and is on lease to the Halton Roman Catholic Board. Fifteen portables were added to the nearby White Oaks Secondary School and five million was allocated to Blakelock S. S. for Program Modification. Will Perdue be re-opened to the public board on June 24, 1991? Was any money saved? How many lives were disrupted?

How many other areas in Halton reflect these scenarios?

The taxpayers will not be duped by election budgets and increased sizes of Finance Committees.

Portables, overcrowded facilities, empty and neglected facilities, communities without facilities, and needless school closures attest to the gross mismanagement of taxpayers' dollars.

All Halton taxpayers are fed up! Fight back!

Yours truly,
Marianne Hawthorne

Reader calls for rep by pop

Perrin Beatty, P.C., M.P.
Wellington-Grey-Dufferin-Simcoe
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

PC	23.5	20	15.3	45.146
Others	6.5	0	0	237,258
				unrepresented

Re: Proportional Representation

Dear Mr. Beatty:

Recent election results in Ontario prompt me to solicit your views on the idea of representation by population. It is obvious to anyone, that the current NDP majority government in Ontario does not represent the expressed wish of voters but is the result of a totally inadequate electoral system, which produced the following situation:

Party	% of votes	seats	% of seats	votes per seat
NDP	37.6	74	56.9	19.328
LIB	32.4	36	27.6	37.569

Far from being the originator of the idea of proportionate representation, I feel that something is gravely amiss in our democratic process and in need of serious examination. Unsuccessful attempts have been made in the past provincially and federally, usually with reference to the extra cost involved due to the increase in members in the legislatures. Experts however have calculated, that the extra cost would be equivalent to the price of one pack of cigarettes per popular per election term (if this is an appropriate term of reference in these health conscious times).

I am looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,
Lothar D. Rabstein

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