

The Independent & Free Press

KEN NUGENT
Publisher

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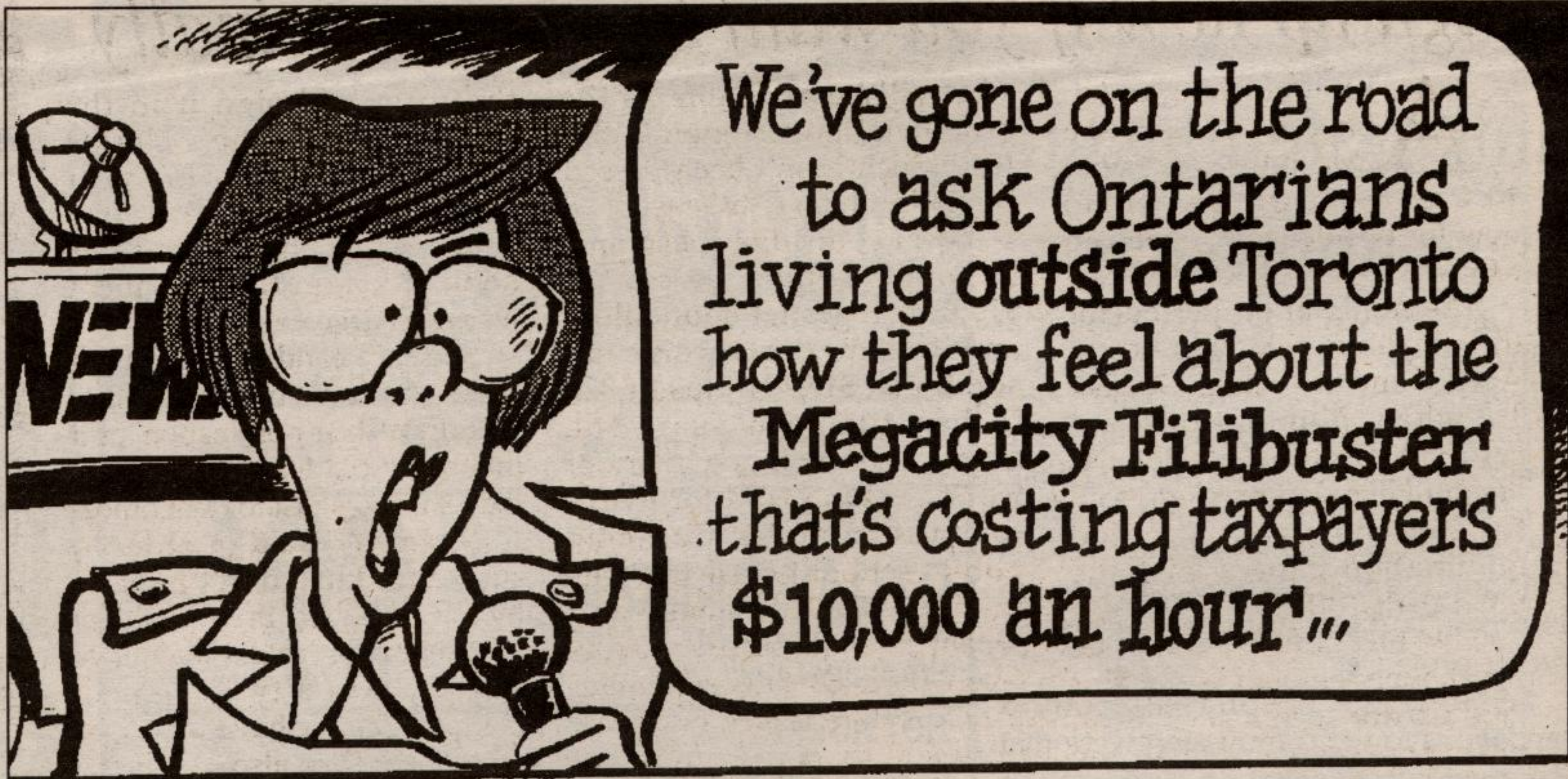
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Time for action

The last words of any significance we heard from Brian Mulroney came some time ago when he was announcing his resignation from the political scene.

However, this week the man Canadians grew to despise, was back on the political stage, albeit briefly, urging federal leaders to reform the Constitution before the year 2000 or risk losing Canada.

While one is tempted to ignore the plea of an infamous former prime minister, we must agree with Mulroney that now is the time to tackle the constitutional issue—for better or worse.

The results of the last sovereignty referendum were downright frightening and the fact this great country came so close to falling into the separation abyss should be incentive enough for the federal government to work at finding some solution to the Quebec problem.

While Mulroney is right in saying that this situation must be addressed now, we don't like the manner in which he, or Jean Chretien, have dealt with Quebec nationalists, and that is with kid gloves.

Chretien must, in conjunction with the premiers, develop some plan of constitutional reform that will appease the nationalistic forces in Quebec and yet not offer ridiculous guarantees of "distinctiveness."

We've said it before and we'll say it again: all of Canada is distinct and no one province is more distinct than another.

Yes, Quebec is special. But so is Red Deer, Alberta, Whistler, British Columbia and Halton Hills. Together this country has accomplished great things and is the envy of most of the world. However, the threat of separation has been a millstone around our necks for too long and to continue blithely along a path of inaction is a recipe for disaster.

Now is the time for our leaders to offer Quebecers a change within Canada—but not a change at a cost we can't afford.

The ball is in your court, Mr. Prime Minister.

Anti-smoking arguments lost in the shouting

Dear editor,

It fills me with great trepidation to follow the news on the anti-smoking campaigns both locally and internationally. Legislators and government functionaries have swallowed the arguments of the extreme tobacco prohibitionists hook, line and sinker. By successfully elevating second-hand smoke to an extreme health hazard, all reasonable arguments for moderation, accommodation and education are drowned out and lost.

A minority of about one-third of our population is thus subjected to draconian laws which infringe deeply on their lifestyle. The 'good samaritans' of the health unit assure us that there is no impact on the economy. I can assure them, that as a smoker, I have long ago avoided bringing my business to places who do not reasonably cater to my habit. This includes arenas, conventions, carriers, hotels, malls, restaurants and will continue to do so.

The current Toronto protests indicate that even the workers in such establishments do not wish to be saved and protected by the health police. Why, then, are the politicians so adamant in passing this type of legislation?

I suspect that being in office too long causes a form of mental illness, which is called megalomania. The results are prohibition, mega dumps, mega cities and mega government to name a few. Soon I will be able to look forward to being sued for child abuse, causing the weather and other forms of anti-social behavior.

Lothar D. Rabstein
Belwood

Letter of the day

Privatization is not the answer

Dear editor,

Hello, my name is Bob Hastie and I work as a head caretaker at Georgetown District High School.

I am a constituent of CUPE 1011. I am well aware that the provincial government intends to give my job to the private sector. I am also well aware that the government intends to take away my successor rights so that my job can go to someone else, once it is privatized.

I am not going to apologize for being concerned about my job. I have been working as a head caretaker for 17 years. I wager that even the likes of Mike Harris or John Snobelen would fight for their jobs. I need my job and I like my job. I will not get rich by doing my job. My salary is only one of many reasons why I won't give up without a fight.

My main job is the maintenance of the building and to supervise the now contracted outside maintenance staff, but I am also responsible for the maintenance budget, health and safety, the school environment (inside and out), major set-ups (commencement) and to oversee all outside contractors (electricians, plumbers, roofing, parking, etc.).

While I agree that many responsible changes can be made to education, privatizing the jobs of workers, especially your lower paid workers is not the answer.

Leave school custodians, education assistants, bus drivers, secretaries, and administrative staff to do their jobs as they have always done them—efficiently and eagerly.

Our children deserve the best there is and Ontario school board workers are the best.

Robert R. Hastie
Head Custodian
Georgetown District High School

Our Readers Write

The Independent & Free Press welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. All letters must be signed and include an address and a daytime telephone number. Letters can be mailed, delivered to our office address at 211 Armstrong Ave., Georgetown, Ont., L7G 4X5, faxed to us at (905) 873-0398 or e-mailed to: independent.freepress@aztec-net.com