



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,
Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9

(905) 878-2341

Fax: 878-2364

Classified: 875-3300

Ian Oliver *Publisher*

Neil Oliver *Associate Publisher*

David Bos *General Manager*

Rob Kelly *Editor*

Karen Huisman *Circulation Manager*

Teri Casas *Office Manager*

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The Canadian Champion, published every Tuesday and Saturday at 191 Main St. E., Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9 (Box 248), is one of The Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing Ltd. group of suburban companies which includes: Ajax / Pickering News Advertiser; Aliston Herald/Courier; Barrie Advance; Brampton Guardian; Burlington Post; City Parent; Collingwood / Wasaga Connection; East York Mirror; Etobicoke Guardian; Georgetown Independent/Acton Free Press; Kingston This Week; Lindsay This Week; Markham Economist & Sun; Midland / Penetanguishene Mirror; Mississauga News; Newmarket / Aurora Era Banner; Northumberland News; North York Mirror; Oakville Beaver; Orillia Today; Oshawa / Whitby / Clarington / Port Perry This Week; Peterborough This Week; Richmond Hill / Thornhill / Vaughan Liberal; Scarborough Mirror; Uxbridge / Stouffville Tribune; Today's Seniors.

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Self employment may not be the dream many believe it is

Many of you dream of self-employment. It would give you freedom to pick and choose what you want to do when you want to do it. You wouldn't have to answer to anyone and there's no one you have to flatter.

You don't have to worry whether someone likes you or thinks you're doing a good job. If you do well, you get all the glory and all the profits.

Sound good? Well, there is a down side.

People who are self-employed do enjoy their work more, but they are much less satisfied with their family life than people who work in other settings.

U.S. psychologists Saroj Parasuraman and Claire Simmers studied how work and family pressures affect a person's satisfaction with their job and family life. The results were presented at a conference on "Work, stress and health" in Washington, D.C. last fall.

They evaluated a large number of self-employed men and women as well as people who worked for outside organizations, such as government agencies, profit- and non-profit groups.

The self-employed loved their independence and their flexibility. They could rearrange their schedule to deal with any personal or family matters that came up.

They were in fact much more satisfied with their jobs than even professionals and managers who worked for outside agencies.

Interestingly, however, they experienced many more demands from their spouses and children. Their flexibility was mined to the hilt — it was relied on, used frequently — until it eventually became a major source of conflict.

They had a very difficult time trying to balance their work and family responsibilities.

As a result, the self-employed people had much lower satisfaction ratings when it came to their family lives.

The ratings weren't just lower, many were quite unhappy.



Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

It was a different picture with people who worked for outside agencies. The work was clear and highly structured. They worked shorter hours than self-employed people.

They could usually leave their work at the office, rather than taking it home. They didn't carry all the weight or responsibility for a work project by themselves because many people were involved.

Due to the reduced hours, pressures, and flexibility, the person who worked for an outside agency was better able to strike a balance between work and family.

There were also some rather predictable differences between self-employed men and women. Women felt more commitment to the home and they were more involved with

their children. They felt ultimately responsible for the home, even if the husband helped out a lot. As a result, they experienced more stress than the men.

I've always thought that working for yourself is the ideal way to combine a strong work ethic and a desire to be heavily involved in parenting. Yet, a lot of good, caring people have tried and found it sadly lacking.

The flexibility and autonomy so basic to self-employment tends to be consumed by either work or family — one at the expense of the other. That doesn't mean it can't be done, but it's clearly not the idyllic choice that many people think it is.

"Their flexibility was mined to the hilt -- it was relied on, used frequently -- until it eventually became a source of major conflict."

DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

Looking Back ...



Queen and king of Milton's Winterfest in 1976 were Nancy McKinnon and Todd Corradetti, both 17.

That was then, this is now

Compared to dealing with quickly growing-up children, babies and toddlers were a piece of cake. Sure, they were physically demanding. They needed feeding, bathing, diapering, picking up, putting down. But they were predictable.

I could count on the babies staying where I had left them. As for toddlers, well, I had to watch them carefully, but they were mostly happy to stay close to mom, exploring their small world.

As these little guys got older, however, they strayed further and further from home until one day we found ourselves with a child/adult studying in a city many miles from the nest.

Now, here's the dilemma. How much influence, as parents, do we or should we have on that offspring? He no longer has to be told to stay in the yard or wash the dishes.

He has his own life to live, but when, if ever, will he be totally independent from his mother and father? Especially since he continues to require some financial assistance, does that mean we have a right to set common sense directions for him?

And even if we did have such a right, it's quite possible that he'd never give us the opportunity to offer our advice. Which is exactly what happened recently.

Our son, the engineering student, or should I say former engineering student, without any warning — goodbye to the predictability of childhood — announced that, one week into his second term of the engineering course, he had quit it and had moved into an arts program.

And if that wasn't enough of a shocker, he informed us that he hated maths and sciences —



On the Homefront

with ESTHER CALDWELL

the two subjects he had specialized and excelled in during high school — and that he was now studying languages.

With his only foreign language contact being a smattering of Italian for his exchange trip to Milan two years ago, he was now undertaking to study the language along with introductory French, German and Spanish.

Ironically, I studied French, Spanish and Italian at university, but I know for a certainty that he is not trying to follow in his mother's footsteps.

For how long had he been mulling over this drastic change? He presented it to us as fait accompli. He's a big boy now, but does he know what he is doing?

Not one week later, we got a second disturbing phone call from him. His world, he said, was coming undone. He and his girlfriend had hit an impasse, they were history, and how could he go on? He was distraught. For the second time in a matter of days, that kid caused the blood to drain out of my head as I paled at his latest news.

Hubby hopped into his car and went to the rescue. Three hours later at the doorstep to the residence, our son greeted him, somewhat apologetically, and said that he and his girlfriend were mending fences and they were working on resolving their differences. They were not, however, willing to divulge what cataclysmic event had turned our weekend, and theirs, topsy-turvy.

And why, he asked, had we not taught him about the hazards of relationships? Failed again as parents.

It was so much simpler and more straightforward with babies and toddlers. Then it was physically exhausting; now it is emotionally draining.

How are we ever going to get through our kids' adulthoods?



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by
Steve
Nease