

# Opinion

## We're united by our disunity

Canada is an idea, a rampart against the republic to the south. It's an idea that has worked relatively well in that, despite more than 123 years of impetus, we are still not Americans.

The various regions of Canada display a diversity similar to Europe, both in the demographic and geographic sense. Politically, Canada has been described as the most loose collection of governments in the world.

Canada is organized as a confederation, that is, an association of provinces, each with a fair bit of autonomy. In the United States there's more of a transfer of power to the central government.

Canada, because of its vastness and governmental structure, has a less homogeneous identity than the U.S., with its powerful central government, or Britain, with its tiny area.

What we share across this land is what makes us Canadians rather than Ontarians, Albertans or Quebecois.

And we don't share much: high taxes, a flag, a song and hockey. Our British heritage is dismissed by 6.5 million French, our rampart against 'Americanization' is crumbling due to free trade and television, and our concern for our culture is fading with the realization that we have no culture.

As southern Ontarians we are more familiar with Irv Weinstein than we are with the present premier of any province, save our own. What kind of shared awareness is that?

Many of the things we might consider Canadian are in fact provincial anomalies. Ontarians refer to soft drinks as *pop*. In Quebec the same thing is *soda*.

Accent and pronunciation are vastly different across Canada. From the drawl of British Columbia to the western twang of the prairies, through the rolling words of the Ottawa Valley to the Maritimes and Newfoundland, where language sounds almost



### Reaume With a View

with BRAD REAUME

Irish, Canada provides a diverse range.

The provinces control liquor laws, transportation and most importantly education. These considerations touch our everyday life and make each province a little bit and sometimes a lot different.

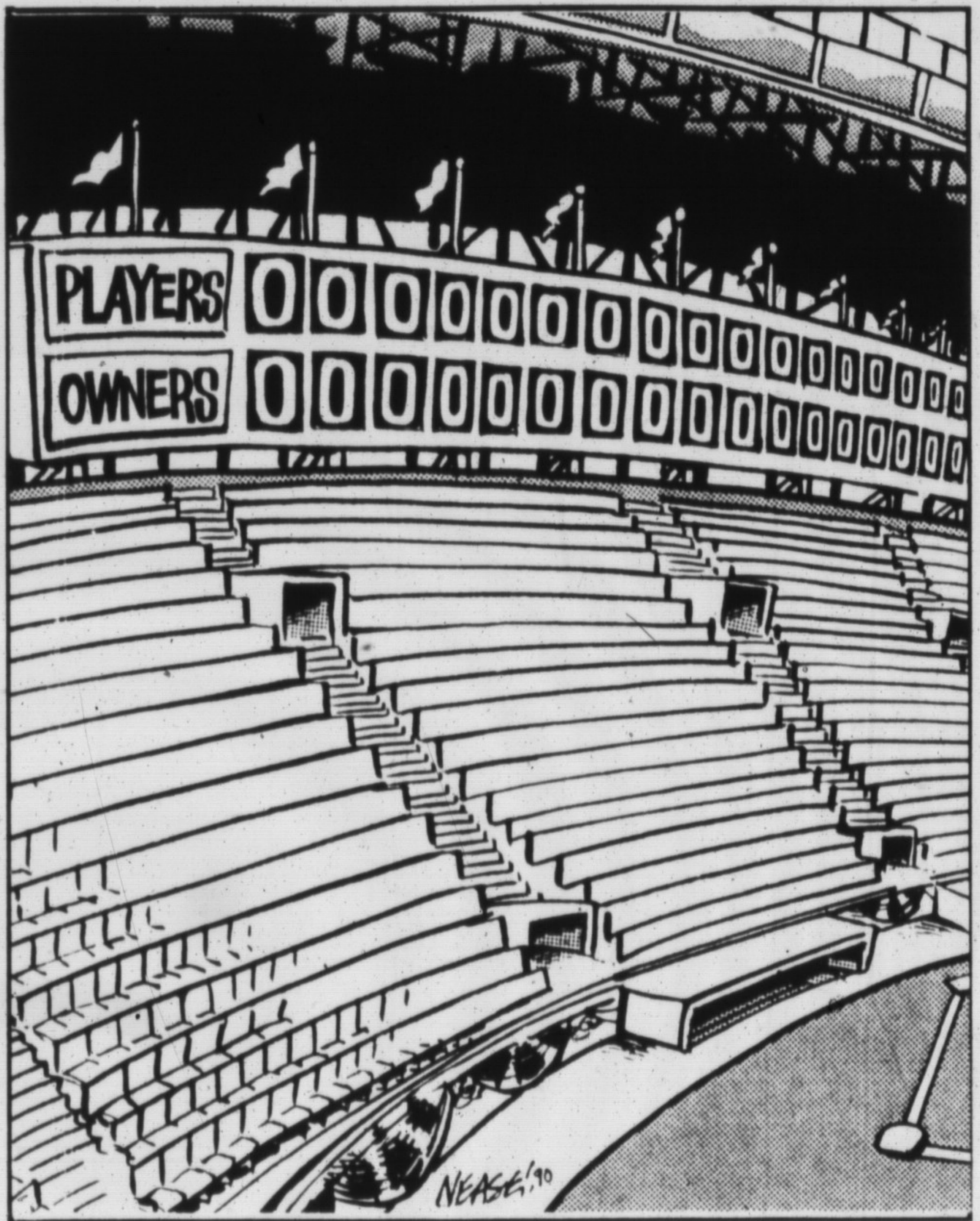
Education should be a tool we use to bring us together, but because each province administers it separately it only adds to our differences.

Canada is the world's melting pot. We've accepted western civilization, added a spritz of American pop culture, pastimes from our various national origins and a touch of everything else. Multicultural? No, I prefer hyper-cultural.

Perhaps we are united by our lack of interest in uniting. Perhaps it is a dislike of pomp and ceremony that unites us. Perhaps it's the lack of concern for these larger issues and a concern for home, health and family which truly identifies a Canadian.

The practice of placing white lines down the centre of roadways began in Halton. Not that white lines are a revelation, but the concern was first addressed here.

Perhaps that says something about us. Preventative measures are boring. But what they achieve is impressive. Those achievements include the reduction of crime, of disease, of poverty and of hardship in general. They are mighty achievements indeed. It seems strange that a nation united by its disunity could do so much.



## Putting pets on the right track

That puppy's really grown. Nice coat, too. You must be feeding him one of the top grade pet foods available, probably recommended by your breeder or vet or both.

Remember that the formula is meant for the first year of a dog's life, but this is approximate. Some dogs have done almost all of their growing at eight or nine months and some are still growing like weeds at 14 months. Always check with your vet.

If you're feeding the correct amount for the dog's weight, he should be fine. When you start to notice a little extra weight over the rib cage and hips, you know he's getting more than he needs. In the interest of maintaining good hips and a sound heart, let's not let any excess weight accumulate. A long, healthy life is our ideal goal.

I can see that you're embarrassed because Ralphie's jumping up on me but, really, the mud will wash off. The long toenails scratching my shins are a little painful but a few aspirin will ease the sting.

These problems are easily remedied. Your vet can show you the correct way to cut his nails. Just don't be deterred by the fact that Ralphie hates it when you touch his feet. Do you let your kids stay up all night because they don't like going to bed?

He's 16 weeks now, and at four months a puppy can get really bratty. A member of your family probably has to lock him in a wrestling hold when someone comes to the door. Either you're afraid he'll run away or you're sure he'll knock someone done in his exuberant welcome.

It's not necessary to manhandle a puppy like that. Use a collar and leash and be relaxed when you open the door to a visitor. The puppy takes his cue from you, the pack leader.



### Pets & You

with ANNE NORMAN

If you're calm, he'll be much more manageable.

Don't haul him around. Simply prevent him from jumping up, with a quick leash correction and the word "no". Tell your visitor not to pat Ralphie until all four feet are on the floor. Make no exceptions. Jumping up is "no" and four on the floor is "good dog".

Once the initial greeting is over and people are settled, you may let the puppy play with your guests, if that is agreeable to everyone. Don't let him bug people just because that's what he wants to do. This is your house, not his. Just remember, no one should need a suit of armour or an athletic support to come through your door.

There, he's calm now. Good boy, Ralphie. Even out in the world, you can conduct yourself with decorum. Never mind what that means; let me give you a scratch behind the ears.

I hope your owner walks you for enjoyment, not elimination. Oh, dear, apparently not. Anyone have a plastic bag?

We'll discuss this next time. Keep up the good work and remember, praise that puppy. He deserves it.

(I'd like to thank the kind lady who wrote in to me. Space limitations prevent my printing the poem but I enjoyed it very much.)

## Playing the dating game



### Psychology

with ARNOLD RINCOVER

Many people want to go out on dates but are afraid to ask. The anxiety is common in every age group, from teenagers to senior citizens, and especially acute in people who have recently ended long-term relationships and have been "out of circulation" for a while.

One of the first things to learn — and often one of the most difficult — is how to distinguish who we should and should not ask for a date. Unfortunately, many people often assume that physical beauty, financial success, social status or position, popularity, family or 'bloodlines', are what may put the other person in or out of reach.

The truth is, these are not the best predictors of who will go out with you. Nothing will put the other person out of reach except that other person. It is their reactions to you that are the best sign or predictor of whether they would like to go out with you.

Do they seem to enjoy talking with you? Do they confide some personal thoughts and feelings? Do they smile a lot? When you ask a question do they give full answers and seem interested, or do they give short answers and seem to be looking for a way to end the conversation? Do they initiate further conversation, instead of letting the conversation die? Do they maintain eye contact, or are they constantly looking at everyone that passes by? Do they touch you (on the shoulder or arm) and seem comfortable at your touch?

These are the types of things that help to tell whether or not a person you are interested in is likely to go out with you. It is not a guarantee, of course, but it is still the best way I know of to assess another person's interest and minimize rejection. As a result, of course, it becomes very important to start a conversation so you can check for these signs.

Dating is not just a process of screening out who will and will not go out with you. If you improve your social skills then more people will want to go out with you. Consequently, helping a person with a dating anxiety might also involve teaching new kinds of dating skills, or getting rid of some behaviours that are a turn-off.

For example, one skill is self-disclosure. It


works both ways — you have to be able to share personal thoughts and feelings, and you need to be able to ask questions which draw out the same in the other person. It is a good indication of liking, intimacy, progress in a relationship, whether both partners begin to share their fears, joys, insecurities, skeletons. It's an exclusive club. You soon begin to count on each other, look forward to sharing anything of importance.

Eye contact is also crucial. Generally, the more the better. Nothing gives a worse message than constantly avoiding the other person's gaze — you look uncomfortable at best, disinterested at worst.

The quality of eye contact is also important. You must avert your gaze on occasion, or at least blink once in a while, otherwise you'll be staring and make the other person uncomfortable. It's important not to have boring eyes — flat, dull, lifeless, with no spark — as, for example, your eyebrows usually go up when you're interested (surprised, etc), and people often squint a bit when they're thinking.

To many people this all comes naturally. To some, however, it does not; they are giving the wrong message, an unintended message, or no message at all. Eye contact, eye movements, and other facial expressions are in fact communication, they communicate just as much as talking, if not more, so it is essential that people with dating anxiety learn to talk with their eyes.

No matter what the task is — how to self-disclose, use your eyes, show feelings, give compliments, participate more (or less) in the conversation, ask questions or make another person feel comfortable — it is often fairly easy to accomplish through role-playing, or using videotape and providing feedback.



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