

Opinion

The right way is my way

Comedian George Carlin once asked, "Why is it that everyone on the road who's going slower than you is an idiot, and everyone going faster is a maniac?"

I caught myself making those judgements the other day. Using the same words, in fact. I smiled in spite of myself and quickly forgot the incident. Two days later I did it again, screaming at some ID-E-OTT, from inside the cocoon of my car. Idiots and maniacs can't hear you, so you can say all sorts of things you'd never repeat in public.

The whole episode got me to thinking. (Oh, no, there he goes *thinking* again. What's with this guy? Quick turn the page!)

Reactions like those are sort of an inbred prejudice against anyone who doesn't think the same way we do. For example, I have decided that a certain speed is the most efficient one to travel a particular route and my decision should be adopted by the whole of humanity. It's a seemingly logical, if unspoken, assumption.

No matter if some blind old bat is cruising down the road at, what is for her, a comfortable 40 km/h. My decision on the correct speed stands. "Sorry grandma, move it! If you can't at least drive the limit then get outta my way!"

Anyone who violates my carefully thought out position, either by going so slowly that I would like to leap out of my moving vehicle, jog up and throttle them; or, by zooming past me quickly enough to form a vapor trail, is out of line with reality. My reality.

Part of the anger stems from a belief that I'm in a hurry, and my presence wherever I'm expected is crucial to the future of this very planet. I also get angry when I see someone else taking my life in their hands. Sorry guys, when it comes to taking chances with my life, I'll do the driving.

Looney tunes, sitting behind high performance engines, strike me as a major societal mistake. Daffy Duck, Bugs Bunny, Elmer



**Reaume
With a View**
with BRAD REAUME

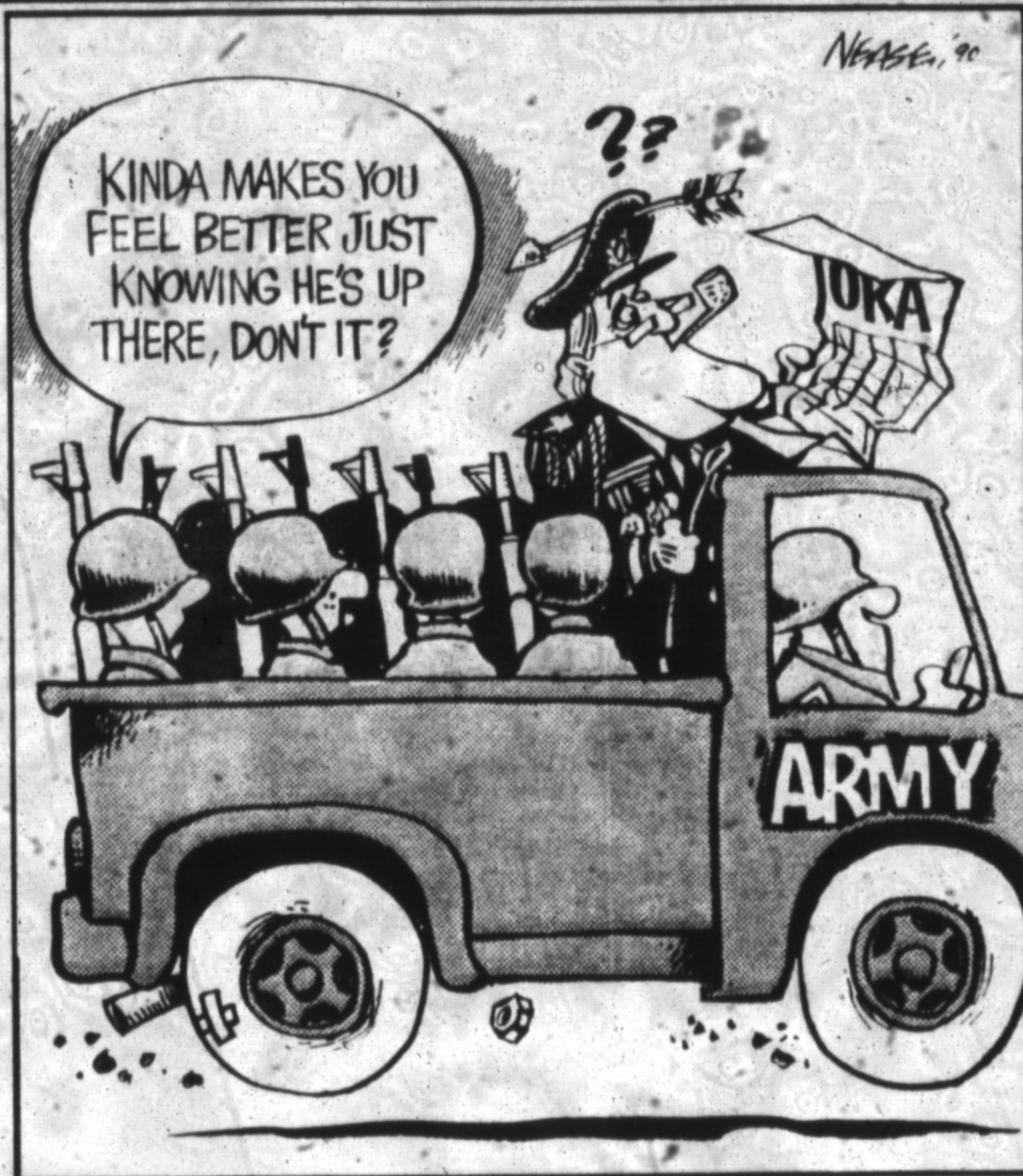
Fudd, and Foghorn Leghorn are only rarely given the opportunity to drive high-powered vehicles in the course of their adventures; and they really are Looney Tunes. Thank God for the sense of calm, sober, responsibility shown by those at Warner Brothers.

It's one thing to blow somebody's beak off. It is quite another to show irresponsible cartoon characters running each other over in hot rods. Kids could get the wrong idea. (This paragraph offers a fine example of the split infinitive at work. Check your local listings for the special, *Our Friend the Split Infinitive*, on your public broadcasting channel.)

On occasion I have found myself driving up the 400 for a nice leisurely week in cottage-country. A leisurely week translates to a leisurely drive, at least that's the way I think. But no, some people are hell-bent for relaxation.

These people barrel up the 400 like they're in a rally with an extra week's vacation for the winner. If that was the case, I might actually join their romp to the lake. But there is no pot of gold at the end of the highway. There is no advantage to swerving in and out of traffic, speeding along fast enough to create a sonic boom, and leaving a trail of horrified disgusted drivers in your wake.

I watch these guys whip by and then pray I won't come upon the twisted wreckage of the cars after they crash, which seems inevitable. Maybe I should just relax, put a George Carlin tape on, and keep my eyes open. Everybody has a different idea of responsible driving, but mine's right.



Latest postal gimmick laughable

On the surface, it would appear that it's business as usual at the post office this summer. Colourful postcards of beaches, mountains and other tourist destinations are travelling back and forth across the country among the usual batch of bills, letters and junk mail. Even the posties themselves are adding a festive air to the proceedings in their new candystriped shirts. It's summer time and, at the post office, the living looks easy.

But, of course, much more must be going on behind the scenes. For one thing, Canada Post's annual announcement of new rates, a regular feature of the dog days of summer, has not been seen yet. And there has been virtually no information released about how the proposed 7 per cent Goods and Services Tax is going to affect post office rates and services if and when the GST is implemented (Jan. 1, 1991 is the scheduled implementation date of the hotly contentious tax).

What is certain is that the price of a stamp will definitely be affected by the 7 per cent GST. But when and how the tax will apply is anyone's guess at the moment. And when the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) requested some answers on how the so called 'consumer savings' were to be passed on to the public via the GST, the response was far from clear.

Canada Post's delay of the new rates has already started to create problems for small businesses, says CFIB director of national affairs Bill Parsons.

"It's very difficult for small business owners to plan ahead when they don't know what the new postal rates will be," says Mr. Parsons, "or how the proposed GST will effect those new rates. Further delay of the announcement means even more confusion as businesses try

Mainstream Canada

with TERRY O'SHAUGHNESSY

to guess what the projected cost of postal service will be, post-GST."

Just about the only thing we've heard this summer from the folks at Canada Post concerns the new service called Confirmation Post. For an extra 90 cents (on top of the price of the stamp) customers can now confirm what the 39-cent stamp promises — to deliver the mail properly.

The extra 90 cents entitles any customer to phone a "toll-free" number one day after the letter was to have been delivered to discover whether it reached a letter carrier. The service does not guarantee that the letter has been delivered, it simply ensures the customer that the letter has reached the appropriate mail bag.

Small business owners across the country are either howling with laughter or raging at the absurdity of this latest gimmick: Charging extra to ensure that a paid-for service was actually performed seems to point to a question within Canada Post itself as to the adequacy of its service.

As the owner of any small business can tell you, healthy competition guarantees a superior product. Competition is something Canada Post has never had to deal with.

□ *Mainstream Canada* is a column representing the opinions of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

The cat gets the last word

Time to visit the vet for the cats' yearly shots. Our destination was a 30-minute drive from the cottage — a country animal clinic open a couple of hours two afternoons a week. First come, first served.

On our way there, Hanky made a special point of squatting in the litter box and telling us in his own malodorous way that he disapproved of this outing.

Panky anchored himself on my headrest and meowed loudly into my ear. Purr-Puss, our sensible feline traveller, went to sleep in the cat cage we had borrowed.

Upon our arrival, I left kids and cats in the car while I checked out the crowd. I entered a stifling, smelly waiting room. Four women, a beagle and a small dog — the floor mop variety — looked up at me. I took my place in one of the last three remaining chairs, ensuring my turn in the pet lineup.

Morris the cat and his owner arrived shortly after, taking the chair on my left. Morris hissed at the dogs and sat panting on the woman's lap.

The vet, two adults and a child finally emerged from the back room, with a tiny hamster in a cage. Beagle's turn. An orange kitten, a young girl and her mother showed up and took over the beagle owner's chair.

Meanwhile, I popped out frequently to make certain everyone was still breathing in the car. The cats were awake and panting. The kids stepped out for a minute.

The car was no hotter than that waiting room. I finally took a brave stand and opened the window on the screen door. I fought through cobwebs and dead bugs to slide it open. That helped a little.

Floor Mop's turn was coming up. He was there to get stitches taken out. A bone he swallowed had been removed surgically. Once Floor Mop headed for the back room, the woman on my right went to her truck to get her huge brown dog. She kept him outside by the front door on a leash.



On the Home Front

with ESTHER CALDWELL

Our cats were up after Big Brown. My 12 year old and I decided that we would carry two cats into the clinic in the cage and the third one in our arms.

We chose hunky Hanky for that third one, thinking he would be the most easygoing. Wrong. As we neared the front door and he caught a glimpse of Big Brown, he flew out of my son's arms. I held him briefly only to lose him too. He ran into the bushes. Panic!

"Here, kitty, kitty!" we called desperately. He stayed just beyond our reach. I thought he was a goner. Finally, I grabbed hold of him. My daughter whipped open the car door and we threw him in. My son and I were covered in scratches from crawling through the undergrowth for 15 minutes. I was so hot my knees were sweating. We rescued him in the nick of time, because Big Brown was just leaving.

Musical cages up next. As each cat got his shots, my son returned him to the car. When he lugged Hanky in, the cat braced himself so securely in the cage, I couldn't pull him out. Finally, the vet tipped over the cage and out spilled Hanky. Vets must learn this little trick at veterinary college.

After the ordeal of the waiting room and the cat chase, the actual appointment was anticlimactic. As we walked out the door, the vet went looking for Morris, who had escaped to a dark corner of the building.

Hanky didn't win a prize for popularity that day. He threw up on the way home — all over his buddies, the kids and the car seats. I guess he had the last word — so to speak.



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