

Opinion

Buddy, can you spare a dime?

What with the Boy Scout apple drives going big time, and Girl Guide cookie sales hovering ominously on the horizon it's time to revisit those lost haunts of childhood.

As a kid I hated being mobilized into an emotion tugging sales force. Not only did I disagree with the practice on moral grounds but I hated putting the nick on some poor, working slob who was just trying to relax after a hard week's work.

Now, years older and marginally wiser (as a child I didn't have an agenda, thus I was free to say or do anything) I still hate the tag team sales tandems that come around pushing apples, cookies, chocolate bars and the like. I really feel sorry for kids that are so shy they can't bear to even knock on the door.

You know the type. They mumble through their memorized sales pitch, struggling against their fears, usually with their heads down. I feel for these kids, because I was one of them. After a few such incidents in my youth I decided that I would never get involved in suburban slavery again. I went for the only viable defence. I would simply do without. If that meant missing a school trip or not being in certain youth group, so be it.

It was the only defence. In the late 1960s defiance was only just beginning to be fashionable. In fact I may have pioneered local defiance of small time authority. After a few scrapes with teachers I realized that you don't have to do anything you don't want to. Nothing.

Of course, there can be advantages to doing unpleasant things. You weigh the advantages and select your course of action. I realized that selling apples was probably in my own best interest, in that it helped me to face such unpleasanties head on, in order to master them.

At the same time something was wrong with selling apples. It's really just pedopanhandling. It's just a ploy to separate people, who already pay huge amounts of municipal taxes, from their money. There comes a time when we have to face economic realities and admit that more funding can't be wrung out of



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people. We either reallocate or go broke. Of course if you start talking about removing one person's sacred cow of subsidy then everyone starts bickering about all government allocations. Instead of bandaging problems with more programs and more subsidies we should start from scratch and justify every nickle spent on our behalf.

It would be nice to educate our children with every advantage. Fact finding trips to Europe, the theatre, high priced guest speakers, tours of museums, art galleries, farms, and the seedy underbelly of urban society would be great background, for an education. It would also cost a fortune, that's why we don't do it.

Our children could benefit from better education if teachers' professional development days were scheduled in the summer months, or even just the week prior to Labour Day.

I can already hear the wild screams rising from the school yards, as the teachers come for my throat. It would give students an extra few days of instruction and it wouldn't cost a cent. Not one.

You just gotta like that. More for the dollar. Taxpayers actually receiving something approaching value for the money. Of course, I think I like the fact that teachers will hate the idea, more than the idea itself. With the teachers hating it it must be good.

Strange, but teachers usually are the instigators of the pedopanhandling rampant in our neighbourhoods. They must like that idea. That way they can fund school trips and still keep the majority of school taxes to pay their salaries. No wonder they like the idea.

The family that plays together . . .

I'm married to the mob. I didn't plan it that way, but 19 years ago, I wasn't thinking clearly when I met a certain young man who agreed to marry me. (He claims I proposed to him; he may be right.)

At that time, I had met his immediate family twice and only briefly. They seemed innocuous enough at the time. Besides, we would be living hundreds of miles away so I figured they would have little effect on our conjugal bliss.

They live closer now, at least through the summer months when we have to share the same lake with them, albeit from opposite shorelines.

Apart from marrying one of theirs, I have little in common with this mob. When we visit them on their own turf, they start cracking open the bottles of beer at noon and head for the kitchen table for a few hundred hands of euchre. I tried to figure out euchre once, but got lost among the tricks, bowers, and "go alones". So, bored to distraction, I slump on the couch, listening to the players slap down their cards on the table and shout at each other. I often wonder if euchre can be played quietly.

As often as possible, I remain at our cottage and let the rest of my family wander yonder and socialize with the mob who don't understand my desire for solitude since they prefer to be constantly surrounded by hubbub.

Every year, my generous, well-meaning spouse invites his mob of relatives to our cottage for Thanksgiving dinner. When I look at it realistically, it makes a lot of sense. We have the largest cottage for entertaining masses of hungry people.

Last year, we hosted a record crowd of 24, eight of whom were under voting age. Despite their small numbers, these little people roared up and down the hallway, screaming in and out of the four exits in our cottage. Then they



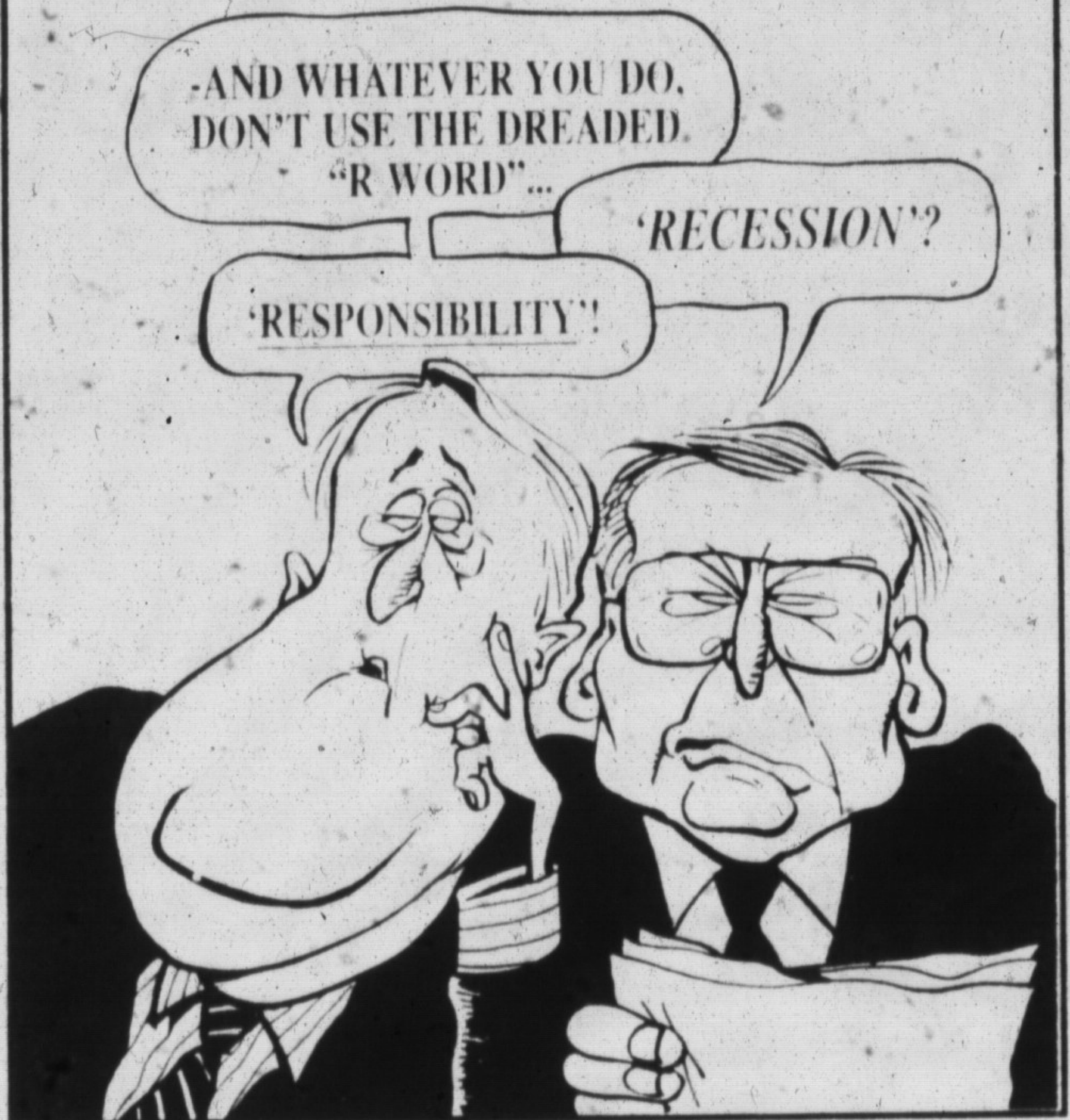
**On the
Home Front**
with ESTHER CALDWELL

screamed around outdoors, colliding into one another, bruising shins and feelings. We adults left them to their own devices.

In the end, it was the adults who needed refereeing as three almost came to blows over misinterpreted comments. A speedy departure of one of the combatants averted the fisticuffs and the remaining folks finished off the evening with a few hands of euchre.

This past Thanksgiving, we had a smaller crowd of 14. After the meal, two of the men whisked my husband temporarily away from the cottage with some feeble excuse. Meanwhile, other relatives scurried around decorating the cottage with streamers and balloons for a surprise 40th birthday party for him. Since this celebration was actually coming two and a half months early, my husband's suspicions were never aroused.

Later that evening, the five children commandeered the balloons. As we sat chatting on the deck, in the balmy night, one of the balloons escaped a small hand, and up and over the cottage it flew, carried by an onshore breeze. What a good idea, thought the others, so for the next hour, kids were squealing in delight as they released their balloons and ran around to the back of the cottage to rescue them in the darkness. They were having so much fun that we adults joined in, but just for the launching, of course, not the fetching. I'll take that game over euchre any day.



It's tough to change a Type A

Are you a Type A personality? How can you tell? Is there any treatment for it?

The most common way of assessing it is through the "structured interview".

"You're driving on the highway and you come up to a car that is going slowly. What do you do about it? Do you honk, flash your lights, or tailgate? Do you get very upset? Do you fantasize about teaching them a lesson — bumping their car, running them off the road, going around them and cutting them off?"

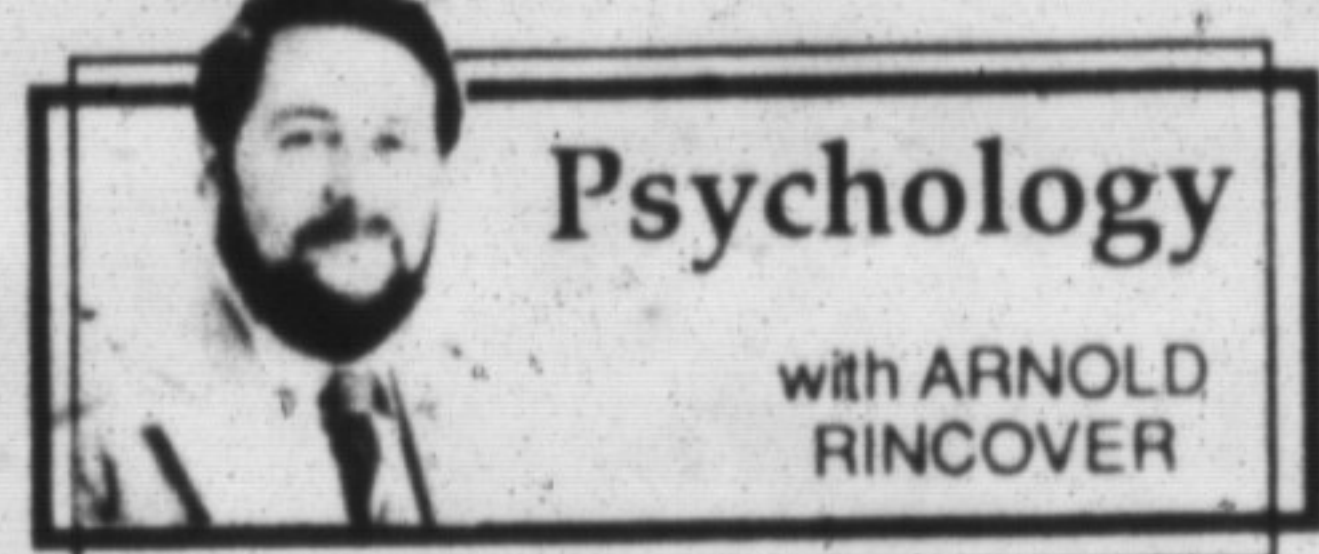
"Most people get up for work early. In your uh-er case, uh-what-uh-time-uh-do-you-uh, ordinarily-uh-er-uh get up?" Are you impatient and upset by the stammering? Is there some hostility in your voice, as if to say, "Let's get on with the damn interview"? Do you find yourself answering before the question is finished?

"If you make an appointment with someone for one o'clock, are you on time? Are you always on time for everything? Do you resent people who are not on time? Do you say anything to them?"

The interview consists of 26 such open-ended questions. The interviewer will be concerned less with what you say than how you say it. Are your answers brief, fast-paced, rather than warm and casual? Are you easily goaded into displays of temper and hostility by follow-up questions ("You even compete with children!"). Do you get upset at being interrupted?

This type of assessment is not always accurate, in part because it leaves much to the judgment of the interviewer. Surprisingly, however, the subjective structured interview has been found to be more accurate than any paper and pencil tests in assessing the Type A personality.

If you are a Type A personality, the treatment outlook has been pretty bleak. Worse yet, studies show Type A moms and dads produce Type A children. They are constantly upping the ante for reinforcement (do more, do it better) and exhorting their kids to "Don't waste



Psychology
with ARNOLD
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time". "Don't make mistakes".

Over a dozen treatment studies have been conducted in the past 10 years, and only one has had encouraging results. Funded by the U.S. Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, this study used a multi-faceted treatment, focussing on behavioral, environmental, cognitive and physiological changes.

For example, clients practised talking more slowly and listening more carefully (without interrupting). A special program concentrated on changing fantasies, thoughts and expectations, so that lower goals were set and everything that happened was not viewed as a challenge, competition, or your sole responsibility. Also, a compliance program for medicine and diet was instituted.

The results were encouraging. Not only was behaviour changed, but the risk of a second heart attack was cut in half, from 5 per cent to 2.5 per cent.

Treating a Type A individual is a tough row to hoe. After all, in our competitive society, Type A behaviour pays off (in the short run) — they're more productive and achieve more, even if personal happiness is sacrificed in the process.

In addition, it is practically a norm (ideal) in our culture — to be aggressive, individualistic, and struggle to get as many material rewards in the shortest amount of time.

"Leisure time", we have taught, is the playground of idle minds and wrongdoing ("The devil's workshop"). Treating the Type A personality will, in the end, require a change in society, so leisure time and time spent with other, (nonwork) people is appreciated.



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