

OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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A cartoon for the middle class

I am Bobray the Magnificent, all quake in my presence. I am the almighty, lord of the universe, do-er and thinker of all that is good, and evil.

On your knees, peons. Knaves and foolish rogues are all that stand to me, and I, in my magnificence allow them to remain defiant just long enough to dream of success, before I sweep them from existence with a mere flicker of an afterthought.

It amuses my sense of honour to let them twist in the foul breeze thus. All men will do my will, or they will face my wrath. All men will venerate me. To argue on its justice is to defy my universal knowledge and to deny my title.

I am the premier example of humanity. I am just and good to those whose service merits my benefaction, and I am equally swift and exacting in my punishment of those whose defiance angers me.

"Turn that rubbish off." Click. "Honestly, the stuff you kids watch today. It'll be a wonder if we have a country left in 30 years with all the drivel you feed into your minds. You should watch something informative."

"But mom, that was the Ontario Legislature channel."

Yes, it's true. The difference between Saturday morning schlock cartoon television and the real nitty gritty of the legislative process, is hard to spot.

Once upon a time, people took their honour to be of the utmost importance, so much that they were willing to die to uphold it. Now the Shelley Martels of this world feel they are so integral to the operation of society itself that their indiscretions should be forgiven in the name of their obviously misguided perception of the greater good.

Thanks to the wanton mismanagement of our society through pork-barrel politics very few politicians have any credibility left. Distrust of the system is rampant due to a lack of social justice. Our society has gone from a meritocracy to a trough where the line of those

Born to have a maid or a self-cleaning house

Hubby and I had a little talk the other night — between dinner and TV — about housework.

We both hate it, do as little as possible, and would like to do even less. I figure I have the greater problem since I'm the one technically at home all day and he's the one bringing home the bacon. Some unwritten contract way back when relegated me to cooking and cleaning — one of those understandings, you know.

Apart from my belief that I was born to be pampered and waited upon (oh, where are my butler, cook and maid?) and the fact that this housework cuts into my leisure time, I am not convinced that it is a given that the one who stays home is the one who should be fully responsible for housework.

After all, I reason, there are five people, three cats, and too many plants living in our house. While I don't expect the plants to water themselves and throw their dead leaves into the compost, why do I get chastised by hubby for not watering the plants, including his prized, ever-thirsty shamrock? The man knows where the water is as well as I do.

And who said the cats were mine? I thought they were family pets. Who cleans the litter box? Who puts down fresh water and regularly adds dry food to their dishes? And who has

REAUME WITH A VIEW

with BRAD REAUME



feeding on the efforts of others has begun to outnumber the providers.

Instead of rating our society on its treatment of the most downtrodden, or on the successes of the few at the top of the social ladder, perhaps it's time to consider our societal success based on the lot of the great middle class.

It's time to return to the idea of societal obligations which go hand in hand with the rights so many constantly jabber about. Without these two forces in balance society will not function.

It is the middle class which exemplifies the balance. They work, they take care of themselves and they pay their taxes, obey laws and generally keep society on an even keel. In tough times it is the middle class who bear the economic brunt, and it is they, who seem most willing to re-double their efforts to bring back good times.

In recent years it seems as if politicians have worried more about trying to narrow the gap by making the poor richer and the rich poorer. In the shuffle they have forgotten the great middle class, the engine of prosperity, except to use them to finance government ideas.

Taxes on the middle class have reached the breaking point. Government programs, which are usually poorly conceived, generously financed and ill-administered, are driving the middle class into extinction, through the high taxes used to finance them. If the government's mandate is to administrate the greatest good for the greatest number of citizens, it is failing miserably.



ON THE HOMEFRONT

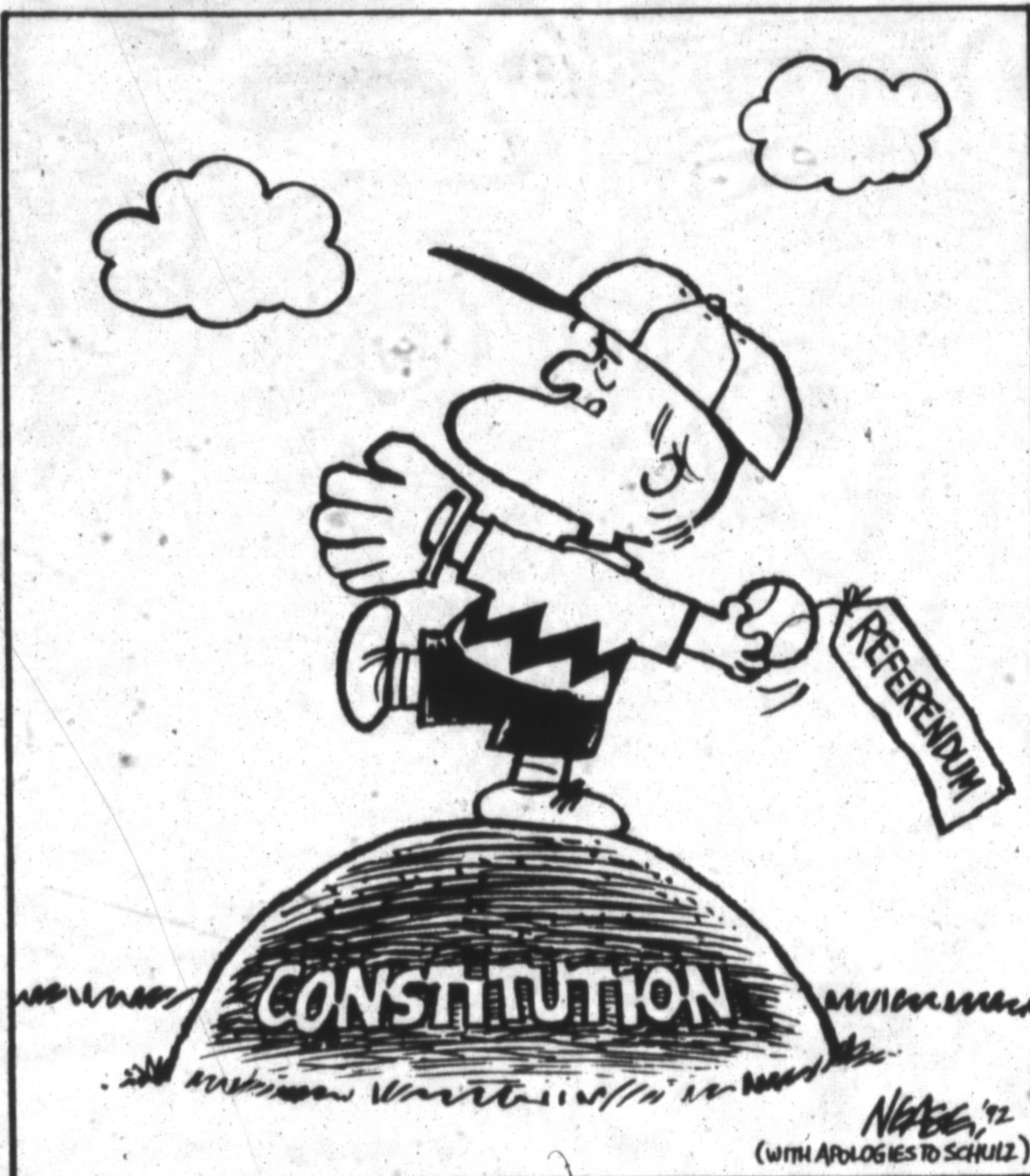
with ESTHER CALDWELL

to bug a certain teenager to give the poor animals some wet food before midnight?

When each of the children was a toddler, I grumbled but at the same time was prepared to pick up after them. But no more!

If the five year old drops his jacket on the hallway floor and leaves his tiny cars spread across the living room carpet and the eight year old decorates the couch with her doll family and abandons library books on the bathroom floor, and the teenager parks his day's clothes on the piano bench and dumps his papers on the kitchen table, and hubby refuses to put away his shoes and has difficulty finding the garbage pail for his beer bottle caps, why should I tidy up?

I despise this role of resident nag. I get fed up pointing out everyone else's messes which



Parenting can be done alone

Psychological factors will play a major role in the adjustment of single-parent families.

We can think of two types of leaders in a family — a "task" leader and an "emotional" leader. The task leader can respond efficiently and effectively under pressure, put aside concerns about people's feelings, take charge and get things done. The emotional leader is not as efficient — she is more concerned with encouragement, emotional support, nurturing, other people's feelings.

If leadership in a family is not shared — eg. in families where fathers play the role of task leader, and mothers the nurturing role of emotional leader — either parent would have a difficult time at single-parenting. Moreover, children will expect that parent to fail on the new tasks.

A single parent will be faced with daily decisions about task vs emotional leadership.

Aaron has been doing his homework, but getting a lot of it wrong. Should we let him go out and play, because he tried hard, or do we make him do it right?

Janet has been playing more around the house since dad left and mom went to work, but she doesn't want to do dishes tonight. Should we let her go play, or make her do the dishes first? Unless mom is practiced at making such decisions, has her priorities straight, and has learned the right mix of task-



PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90S

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

oriented and emotional leadership, the guilt and indecisiveness will be overwhelming.

Second, the child will have a different perspective on the single-parent family. The child compares the new single-parent family with an idealized version of the two-parent family, and several disadvantages emerge: there is now one less parent to approach with your problem; there is no second parent to appeal to if you think a decision was unfair; one parent provides less diversity of viewpoint; one parent is able to teach the child in a more limited range of skills; there is less opportunity to play with and talk to parents. To make matters worse, the single parent may also have an idealized view of what two-parent families are like.

In order to dispel fantasies about the superiority of the two-parent family, both the parent and the child need to become familiar with a broad range of single-parent and two-parent families. This is not easy information to get, as the media idealizes two-parent families, and mom's energy, time and network for socializing has become more limited.

Nonetheless, the truth is that many two-parent families function like single-parent families, as the father is away (or busy) most of the time. In families where both parents are career-oriented, there is often little in the way of direct parenting.

Third, social isolation will be a problem. Relationships between two-parent families and single-parent families are often strained. Single parents represent a dissolved family to a family that may itself be in conflict.

In addition, single-parenting presents problems for the development of new relationships. Dating and parenting are thought of as mutually exclusive by many people. Involvement in dating will often lead to feelings of abandonment in children — the loss of dad is still fresh in their mind, and now mom doesn't have as much time for them. Finally, mom worries how the children will get along with any new guy she meets.

These concerns contribute to the loneliness of single parents and they must be prepared for them. They must ignore stereotypes, become more efficient, worry less about what others think, make positive social contact, and pursue intimate relationships that appeal to them with a free mind.