

OPINION

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RRSPs - buying into adulthood

I'm an adult now.

Last night I dreamed that my RRSP didn't mature on the correct date. So now I'm convinced, depressed, and old.

As a child I always wondered when I would become an adult. Is it a state of mind? Is it a state of cash? Of worry? Of independence?

Actually the signs of adulthood have been there for some time. When I was first addressed as 'sir' it worried me, but I was only 18 and just happened to be wearing a nice suit, glasses and was carrying *The Globe and Mail* along 'Sir Street', I mean, Bay Street in Toronto.

I do remember being somewhat shaken by the incident. Here I was, a kid, being addressed as my father might. This was definitely not good, I was much closer to death than I ever imagined. Age, which is never good, was creeping up on my teenage sensibilities.

Of course merely being addressed as 'sir' does not confer adulthood on anyone. No, sirree! (Pun intended.) Adulthood is much more subtle, much more a collection of responsibilities, debts and freedoms than any mere title can bestow.

Some might define adulthood as the maturity to understand and assume the rights and obligations of an independent human being. Others might say that it's having your own place and not getting evicted before the lease expires. Until recently, I would have subscribed to the latter theory.

It doesn't take a genius to realize that the latter definition is a microcosm of the former. Of course, in reality adulthood is much more complicated. It is conducting a life in concert with society. Society can be shunned or embraced, but an adult will shun it with the obligations of a citizen.

Hence my realization that I'm now an adult. I no longer shun my responsibility to society to maintain myself in my decrepitude. I buy RRSPs and I worry about them: When some-

REAUME WITH A VIEW

with BRAD REAUME



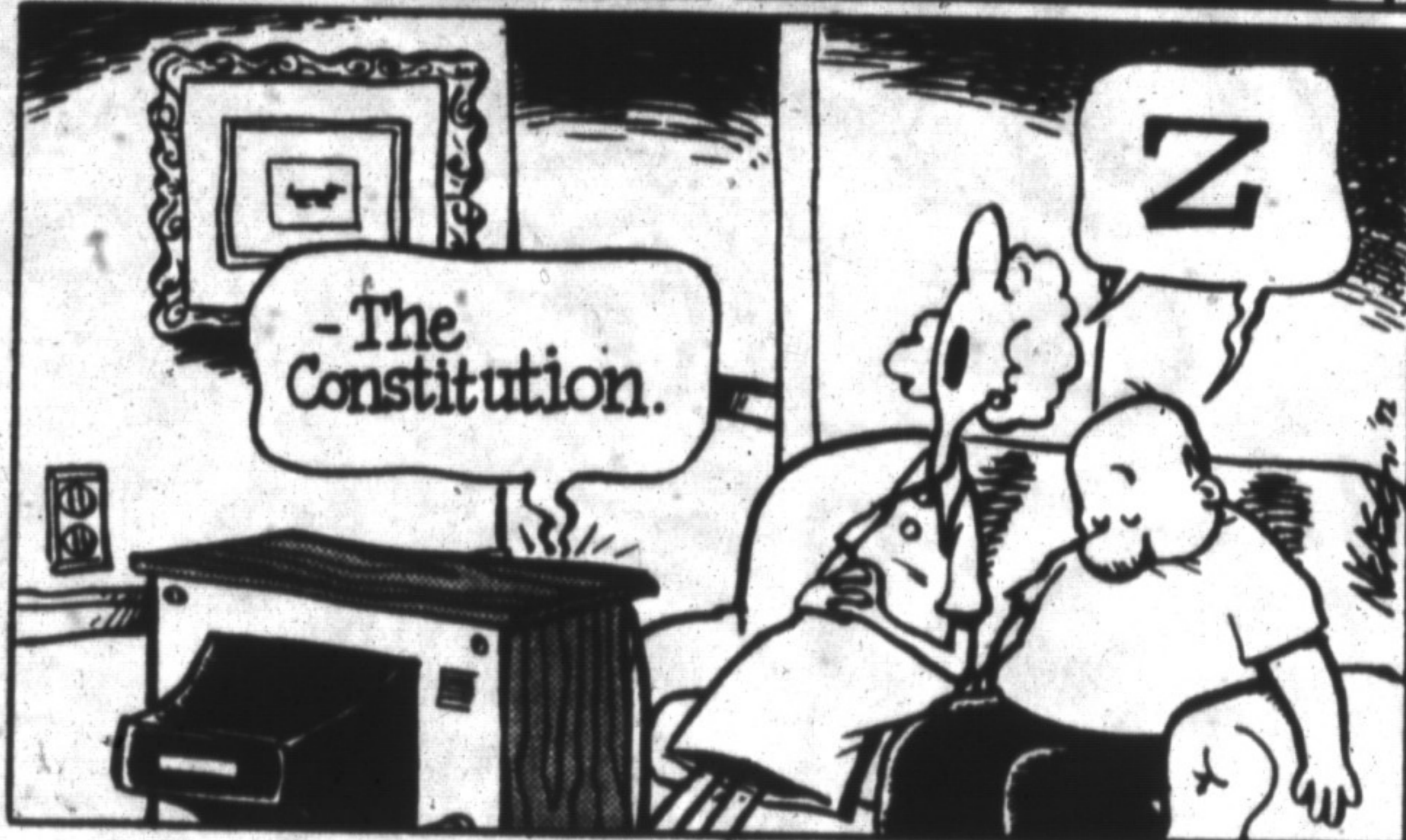
one calls me 'sir' I no longer feel a cringe of horror, but a little stab of consumer respect. Yuck!

I've realized that I've already made the turn towards adulthood, without even knowing it. I smile amusedly at the antics of my nieces and nephews rather than encourage them in meaningless and punishable acts of defiance. When they fall (and go boom), I'm actually concerned even though I know that children's bones are made of steel, that children cannot possibly hurt themselves, save with sharp instruments, and that tears are a device children use to get adult attention.

Still, there is hope. I love canned ravioli, I loathe fresh pasta, pork and beans are a great side dish and I couldn't live without pizza. I'd rather be a participant in sports than a coach. My car, like my living quarters is in a constant state of functional disrepair.

On the other hand, I wear my hair shorter than in days gone by. My shoe size hasn't changed since sometime in the 1970s, I turn out lights, and I've ceased to worry about losing my hair, I can only think of the savings to be had.

I can, I suppose, look forward to the day when I'll cash those RRSPs and start the move back to childhood. Someday my offspring will have to cut my meat at dinner, before rolling their eyes at my lack of short-term memory. It will be bliss, or at least one step closer to bliss than I am now. I guess that means that adulthood brings one closer to God.



Cultivating an attentive child

Children with an attentional deficit disorder (ADD) don't always live up to this label — they can, in some situations be attentive. In fact, sometimes they attend quite well.

The question, then, is when will they attend and when won't they? Why do they attend sometimes and not at others?

We do have some answers:

- * The degree of structure and demands will influence whether or not a child shows attentional problems — in low demand or free-play situations, ADD children are often indistinguishable from other children.

- * When instructions are repeated frequently, attentional problems are lessened.

- * When powerful rewards (and punishment) are used, it has significantly lessened, and sometimes entirely eliminated, problems due to inattention and impulsiveness.

- * ADD children display fewer problems in novel or unfamiliar situations, but problem behaviors increase as they gain familiarity with those situations.

These findings tell us that attentional deficits are not uncontrolled. When children are motivated or interested, they are able to concentrate much better. In fact, some researchers question whether ADD is really a deficit in at-



PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90S

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

tention. They argue that it may be more a problem in the way their behavior is regulated by its consequences.

There are generally three major strategies parents and teachers can use to help. First, we can increase the motivation for attending, cooperating, trying harder. Second, we can present the task differently, to make it easier, shorter, clearer. Third, we can build self-control.

Encouraging a child to sit on the sofa (quietly), helping him to clean up his toys, showing him how to read the words in the book, using of praise for completing a task or following your instructions, will have a powerful effect.

We can add rewards, such as privileges when the child does well, and reprimands or loss of privileges when the child behaves inappropriately.

We should reduce the complexity of tasks and instructions. Make instructions short and sweet. Give tasks that are easier to do at first, in order to insure success, then gradually building up levels of difficulty and complexity. And repeat instructions frequently throughout the task.

We keep a sharp eye out for when the child is overdoing it, and teach him that good things happen when he shows some self-control. We can say, "You can play with the racing cars when you put the other toys away." Then, we hold the racing cars until it is done, and praise the child when the task is accomplished.

When reading a story we spice it up with animation, enthusiasm, action, and sound, so it's enjoyable for him to listen. If he fidgets too much, acts silly, talks too loud or too fast, then we stop and tell him "I can't read while you're doing that". If enjoyable things happen when he shows some self-control, and unpleasant things happen when he is out of control, most children will begin to control themselves, slow down, watch and listen.

Finally, give external, concrete cues for time; don't rely on their judgment. We can't just say "keep going", "don't space out". "Just four more minutes", because they are impulsive and not good judging time. Instead, we might use a portable timer, which is set at the amount of time he has left to play, before bedtime, to read, or to get his chores done. Similarly, we can use "cue cards", such as a short list of things he has to do before bedtime, which is placed on his bathroom mirror or dresser.

A bus ride to the single life and back again

I threw off my suburban shackles last week and took a bus to Montreal to spend four days with my single sister and her white cat. Talk about culture shock.

For starters, I, a small townner, was plunged into a seething mass of humanity. I had little time to catch my breath as my sister and I, lugging my baggage, walked from the bus terminal into downtown Montreal on an unseasonably hot spring evening. (Naturally I had packed long johns, gloves and woollen hat in the event of snow.)

What did I want to do during my stay in the big city my sister wanted to know. Eat out and climb Mount Royal, I replied. To that end, we dropped into our first of unusual (to me) eateries where we heaped our plates full of vegetarian delights.

Knowing I was a big fan of walking, my sister led me through the busy streets swarming with manic motorists and suicidal cyclists.

A friend of hers joined us at an outdoor cafe for capuccinos and pausseries. Hey, this is living, I thought.

It was dark by the time we reached my sister's apartment and rode the elevator to the 15th floor. Gulp! What if there were an earthquake? What if there were a fire? No turning back now, I thought.

Her tiny apartment consisted of an L-shaped room, a kitchenette and a bathroom. The two



ON THE HOMEFRONT

with ESTHER CALDWELL

huge, curtainless windows looked across at Mount Royal and down down down to the street.

Lest vertigo overtake me, I checked out the pad: two dressers, a filing cabinet, a drafting table (my sister is a graphic artist), a couch, an armchair holding two of the many piles of papers, three bookshelves, and a bed in the corner. I didn't mention a table because there wasn't one.

The din of the traffic flooded in through the open windows and I slept fitfully that first night.

The cat took a shine to me as well, bussing me with his cold, wet nose, chewing on my pyjama buttons, attacking my watch, and purring in my ear.

In the mornings, I reached outside the apartment door and scooped up the Montreal Gazette and pored through it as if I had never before read a newspaper.

The two of us explored the city, strolling through nearby Outremont, to see how the

other half lived, and climbing to the top of Mount Royal, not once but twice.

My sister, younger than I by eight years, struggled along with aching feet and legs while I bounded ahead, free from all responsibilities.

St. Catherine Street, the main drag, became a familiar haunt. I purchased more audiocassettes than I dare to reveal and I found just what I was looking for — a spring jacket with lots of pockets. On our outings, we passed street vendors, musicians, mime artists, jugglers and panhandlers.

My sister introduced me to Middle Eastern food and other exotic cuisine that small town Ontario doesn't offer. We rarely ate at home, because even after I invested in a light bulb for the fridge, I discovered it was full of seeds, grains and other unidentifiable items — nothing particularly palatable. The kitchen cupboards held pastas, herbal teas and more dishes for the cat than for us.

Surprisingly, I suffered no withdrawal symptoms in the evenings despite the lack of a VCR, colour TV and cable.

The small black and white TV sitting on one of the bookshelves offered two English-speaking channels. Conversation proved more scintillating.

I left as I had arrived — on a bus. Time to shed my short-lived single status and return to my former life.