

OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Emperor Brian has no clothes

The politicians of Canada are once more doing the smoke and mirrors act with our so called unity referendum. Like the last federal election which was made into a single issue vote, namely free trade, we are given more doom and gloom and a single issue with the referendum.

Although I am not in agreement with many of the groups promoting the 'no' vote, I am totally disgusted with our government leaders on the lack of substance provided for consideration of a 'yes' vote. The consensus arrived at in PEI, is only to have further discussions, which really is a continuance of the status quo or Canada's normal snafu status.

The whole process is backwards. This vote isn't going to rectify our problems regarding declining health care, economic disparity, screwed up immigration policies, and high taxes, nor is it offering any concrete plans to address these issues.

Why should I put my faith in hang-'em Otto, which-way-will-he-go Rae, I'll-be-the-moderator Turner, and two-years-to-go Duignan? Canada has been successful because of the abundance of natural resources at our disposal and the hard-working people populating the country. We now have people paid not to work and our resources have become uncompetitive in world markets and so we must do something about our mediocre politicians and unresponsive political system.

Here are some of my suggestions:

□ Dump the senate. The Honorable Senator Ed Lawson, a former Teamsters boss, missed 1,111 of 1,379 sittings in his first 16 years. He says he has a contract and should be paid in full to the year 2005 at \$75,000 per year. Tar and feathering would be too good for him.

□ Ten referendum questions per year attached to our income tax form would give us

VIEW POINT



with PATRICK KELLY

more input into the running of our country and wouldn't cost us \$100 million.

□ Immediate firing of any elected politician with loss of all benefits for infractions of the criminal code. They keep acting like they're better and more responsible than the rest of us so let's make them live up to higher standards.

□ Immediate deportation of any immigrant breaking the criminal code in the first five years with responsibility taken away from the immigration board.

□ Recall any politician, where a petition of more than 50 per cent of the people who actually voted requested it, with a new election being called for that riding.

□ Give every native Indian \$1 million, cancel their land claims and make them live by the same laws as the rest of us.

□ Let's elect our own judges.
□ Let's eliminate all forms of tax other than personal with a minimum amount being set for individuals and corporations.

□ Make proficiency in one of our official languages a requirement for citizenship and its benefits.

What about capital punishment and abortion? Wouldn't a referendum on these questions be more beneficial in outlining the needs of our citizens in determining what we want for Canada and its future?

Look at your children. Their share of our debt is \$47,000 each, their job prospects are lower than our own, and Joe Clark says a 'no' vote will tear apart their country. We need a tea party not a Mulroney crapshoot.

A lesson on attendance — solving the whole problem

It was only December and Donnie was already absent for half of the school days.

Donnie was actually quite bright — he was passing all his sixth grade subjects despite coming only half the time — yet he wasn't being challenged. He wasn't learning to his potential, and he was getting into a lot of mischief on the streets. I was called in to see if there was anything I could do.

Chronic absenteeism is such a major problem in schools that most school boards have now hired or assigned staff exclusively for attendance problems.

I sat down with Donnie to find out what the problem was. After a while, it came out that he was being teased by two boys in class. School had become an upsetting and unpleasant place to be... or so we thought. We made up a contract: he could change classes; he would meet regularly with a child care worker who he liked, and who could keep tabs on any future problems or concerns he might have; he could come to the Resource Teacher's office at anytime; and stay there to work alone for as long as he wanted, if anyone or anything at all upset him; additional goodies (eg. allowance) were supplied by mom if he attended school.

The idea was just to get Donnie to come to school — make it attractive and remove the source of his fears — later we could fade out the special arrangements.

He came to school for a week, and then he didn't show up for the next four days. He said he was sick, but he wasn't. He said the child care worker had broken her word, I had done something wrong, there were new kids teasing him. He was a manipulator and good at it. He



PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90S

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

wasn't anxious at all and he wasn't being teased. He just wanted to stay home, watch TV and play Nintendo, roam the streets while his parents were at work.

We called him in, and laid down the law. We told him he violated our trust and our friendship, that we felt used. We told him he signed an agreement and he was going to live up to his commitment. If he wasn't at school by 8:50, we were going to his house to pick him up. Mom, who left early for work, would return home to let us in. If he wasn't there (we were afraid he would hide or even run away), we would call the police to pick him up, which we knew would be embarrassing to him.

While I was saying this (in front of the principal, school staff, and mom), Donnie didn't say a word... he just glared menacingly at mom. Mom was sobbing, caressing his cheek with her forefinger saying, "It's okay, honey". Mom had never placed any limits on Donnie, and Donnie knew how to manipulate her to get anything he wanted.

Donnie hasn't missed a day since, and we never once had to go get him. Attending regularly has allowed him to make several friends, who he now sees outside of school. His schoolwork is all A's and B's. And mom



A tale of two meowing kittens

Are you ready for one more cat tale? Remember the kitten hubby brought home one weekend last summer? Well, not to be outdone, I too ended up adopting a kitten, but it was purely unintentional and coincidental, believe me.

Mad Max, the tiny, short-haired, beige kitten — hubby's contribution to our household — was just getting comfortable in his new surroundings when I took advantage of another feline opportunity.

An acquaintance of mine in cottageland invited me to tour her new home one afternoon. As I got out of my vehicle to head for her front door, I heard a plaintive meowing (what meowing isn't plaintive?) in the nearby bushes.

"Is that your cat?" I asked my friend as I stepped indoors.

"No," she replied. "It's a stray. It's been around for awhile."

Later, when I was leaving, my friend accompanied me to the van and once again I could hear the meowing. Suddenly, out of the undergrowth walked a long-haired, beige kitten. She circled me cautiously before approaching. I reached out and petted her. A noisy purr motor started up immediately. I was hooked.

was so thrilled she was attending a parenting program, to learn how to teach him about cooperation, morals and social skills.

It doesn't often work this well. Many parents can't arrange their schedules (or their priorities) to provide the cooperation we need. Some parents can't or won't force their child to do anything. What can we do then?

In the U.S., Wisconsin has implemented a "no school, no money" policy, wherein welfare checks are reduced (eg. \$75) if a child doesn't attend for two days, and the reduction increases the more school a child misses.

Twenty states are considering "no school, no drive" policies for high school students. Some have implemented "no school, no play" policies, which means a child can't participate in extracurricular activities, such as school sports. The policies are controversial, however, because they don't deal with real issues — poverty, family problems, parenting skills, nutrition — which cause a child to miss school.

One program in Wisconsin, called Learnfare, has gone the extra mile, providing a case manager, free transportation for these children, child care so mom can get help (eg. parenting, education or marriage counselling). The results are too young to be conclusive, but they look spectacular so far. For 7,500 problem students, 83 per cent of children were back to school within three months, and staying there. And almost half of the parents were never docked a dollar.

Whatever Learnfare costs, it saves a community tenfold in the long run — in police services, vandalism, crime, special education, and community mental health services.



ON THE HOMEFRONT

with ESTHER CALDWELL

I looked at my friend pleadingly: "Can't you take the cat into your home?"

"No," she said. "My husband and son are both allergic to cats."

So what could I do? I knew I would feel guilty if I walked away from the affectionate, homeless animal, and as luck would have it, I just happened to be carrying a pet cage into which I deposited the unsuspecting kitten for the short ride back to the cottage. She carried on as if she were about to be executed.

No one was home when I drove into the driveway. I carried the kitten into the kitchen and put down food for her. She attacked it ravenously and proceeded to clean up meal droppings from under the dining-room table, mostly in the vicinity of the six-year-old's chair.

She and Max greeted one another hesitatingly at first, but soon accepted one another. Purr-Fuss, the older black cat, was offended by our introducing yet another animal into her home.

When hubby took a look at our second bundle of beige fure, he blurted out, "We'll call her Pax." None of the deliberating we had experienced in naming Max.

What I have failed to mention up to this point is that Max was under the weather when Pax arrived on the scene. Poor Max was suffering from a cold — bronchotracheitis, if you want to be fancy. His eyes were watering, he was sneezing, and his nose was stuffed up. He slept most of the time, although he managed to pull himself together occasionally to stroll over to the food and water dishes. He and hubby had visited the vet earlier that week and the bottom line was: either he got well or he didn't. (I was to repeat those very words to hubby a few weeks later when he was grounded with the flu.)

Inevitably, Pax contracted the same illness and we had to watch helplessly as she worked her way through it. They were both on the road to recovery when we welcomed a third beige kitten (oh no, not another one, you say) who spent a week with us while his family went on a trip. He was the gang leader and Max and Pax followed him where no other cats dared — onto the table and kitchen counter, straight into the refrigerator and garbage pail.

We are home from the cottage now — three cats, three kids, one hubby, and me. I am not expecting any further additions or deletions to the family for a long time. Stray birds, cats, dogs, husbands, and children need not apply, although I'd consider taking in a cook or housekeeper.