



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Good direction, but jury still out

Ontario Finance Minister Ernie Eves suggested last week the reason for the drop in Conservative popularity was a poor job of communication between his party and the public. Hear! Hear! Now what's he going to do about it?

Each evening some ex-minister of the NDP or Liberal government is heard predicting doom and gloom over various Tory initiatives. But just telling us they are wrong is no longer a good enough response.

While I support the direction of the Mike Harris government, particularly after 10 years of NDP and Liberal incompetence, I also remember that these disastrous years began on a foundation of political largesse approved by previous Conservative governments. The three parties seemed liked peas in a pod.

After a one-day session — the first since before Christmas — to vote on the omnibus bill they are now again in recess until early March. If I compared this schedule to their complaints about teachers having excessive preparation time, I would have to suggest our MPPs are making teachers look like workaholics.

There are many changes being made and I want to see them debated. Municipal Affairs Minister Al Leach said last week he likes the Golden report recommendations on Actual Value Assessment for property taxation, and unless something better pops up he intends to make that system law.

Who appointed him dictator? What happened to the various studies compiled by property owners evaluating fair taxation? They recommended Unit Value Assessment.

There are 17 Metro Toronto MPPs and 17 MPPs from its suburban regions. I'd like to see our regional MPPs get together and make a statement on how they would vote regarding the proposed GTA council.

View Point

with PATRICK KELLY



I have heard our MPP Ted Chudleigh say he isn't in favor of it. Will he get real input, or will it be a cabinet decision?

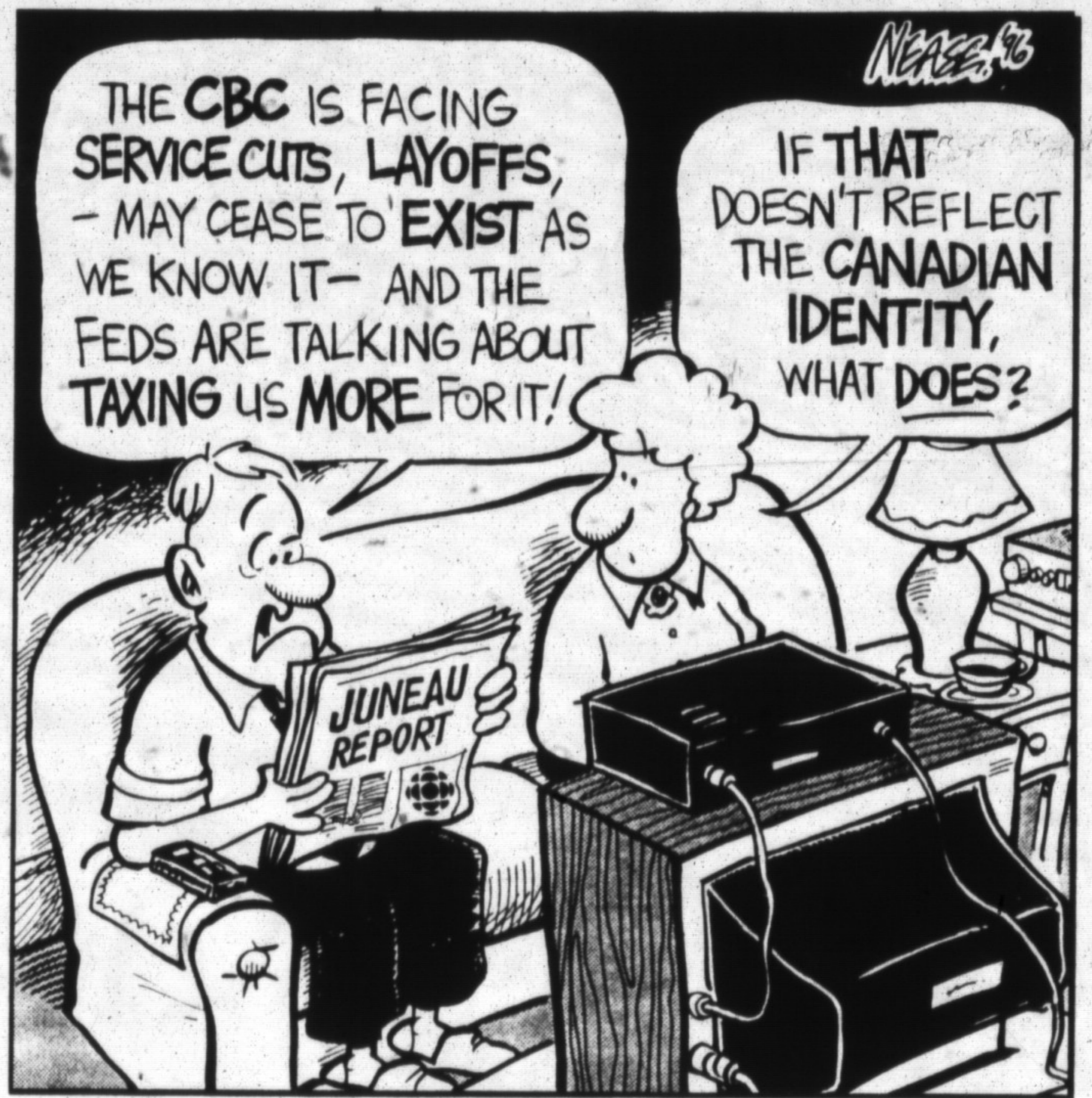
More in hope than expectation I still believe this government to be the most open we have experienced in years. So why did the NDP have to leak the document last week on educational costs, showing teachers only represent approximately 50 per cent of those costs?

If the facts are correct teachers should be screaming blue murder at their union representatives for not bring out this information previously. If they are correct than our local school board members, who constantly promote the idea that teacher salary and benefit packages absorb 80 to 90 per cent of system costs, don't know what they are talking about. Surprise, surprise. What is the truth?

I think as voters we are prepared to face the truth. Unfortunately most of what we receive are opinions.

Listening to the debates on the omnibus bill and the silliness of the statements from many opposition MPPs convinced me again that I made the right choice in supporting Mike Harris, but I want a better rationale than just knowing I picked the best of three bad offerings.

Mr. Eves is correct. We need improved communications.



He's handy, and a good cook too

It is late Sunday morning on the home front. I am bombarded by sounds from upstairs. The 12-year-old is warming up with scales before launching into her classical pieces on the piano in the livingroom. From the 17-year-old's bedroom just above my basement office comes blasting the music of my youth — San Francisco (Be Sure To Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair). I consider playing the latest Chieftains' recording, but it would result in a cacophony of sounds.

Also in the livingroom, most likely with cotton stuffed in his ears, sits hubby, his workday already over. He is reading one of the paperbacks I regularly and randomly grab off the public library shelves. He will make himself a sandwich soon and return to his armchair before succumbing to an afternoon siesta.

Being the inveterate early riser, hubby has completed his weekend jobs. He has replaced the broken outdoor light at our front door, rescued the basement ceiling registers that were hanging precariously in the rec room and our bedroom, tightened up the folding door into my office so it doesn't continually come off its track, and even as I was still under the warm covers snuggled up with a good romance novel,



On the Homefront

with ESTHER CALDWELL

he marched into our bedroom with a power screwdriver to fix the frame of our bed — it was threatening to collapse.

Toughy, our white cat, who was enjoying the leisurely lie-in with me, stretched, then walked to the edge of the bed for a closer inspection of handy hubby and his noisy tools. Toughy has since jumped up onto my desk and propelled himself up to the small windowsill, scattering my papers all over the floor in the process. He is nose to nose through the window with his brother and feline neighbor, fluffy white B.J. (not to be confused with our B.T.) who is peering in at us.

Our nine-year-old son is occupied with spreading his Lego all over the livingroom floor. He is thrilled with his latest acquisitions, from his older brother, who sold him several sets last evening. I am afraid to ask the extortion price, but both parties seem satisfied with the deal. Usually, the youngest inherits a set of carefully preserved Lego from his brother each Christmas and on his birthday, but I guess the youngster couldn't wait for the next offering in May.

Silence now reigns from above. Oops, I spoke too soon. Now the teen is practising his French horn; the windows are vibrating. And oh no! Not satisfied with the ivories, the 12-year-old has descended here to my inner sanctum and spied my tin whistle. She is serenading me.

The rest of the day lies ahead. Letters to write — still way behind, I have to confess. My main complaint is that I'm already receiving replies from friends I wrote in late December. It appears they were so happy to finally hear from me they couldn't bear to wait six months or so to reply, so I'm back at the same number of letters I owed before I went on this letter writing catch-up.

Already the mouths and stomachs in this household are begging an answer to the question "What's for dinner?" I'm going to pick up some beef this afternoon so hubby can prepare a tasty stew. He's so good at that sort of thing.

Holding your ground right choice in the end

There's a fine line that parents try to walk. We want to give our children choices, freedom and independence so they'll learn to think for themselves, feel confident and self-reliant. On the other hand, we can't give them too much freedom. We have to protect them, set limits and discipline them. The question then is how do you tell when you're being appropriately firm, too permissive or too strict?

One Saturday morning your 10-year-old tells you he's been invited to go to a movie that night with his friend, David. You tell him it's okay, if he does his chores first. He agrees. Seven o'clock rolls around and the chores aren't done. He comes to you and asks for money for the movie and you say, "I'm sorry, but your chores aren't done so you'll have to miss the movie."

He's stunned. He pleads with you. "Aww, geez Mom, I forgot. I'm sorry, really. I swear I'll do them tomorrow and I'll do any extra chores you want. I've been dying to see this movie. It's not fair to David. And he'll hate me and never invite me again. Please, Mom!"

What do you do? It's a key moment in the development of every parent and every child.



Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

How do you handle such situations especially in the early child-rearing years, which will play a major role in what kind of a person your child will become.

The right thing is to be firm — "I'm sorry, but we had an agreement. I understand how much you want to be with David and go to the movie, but there's a reason you have chores and we all have some responsibilities to help out here. If it was so important, you should have done your chores right away." Then you should go do something else. Don't hang around for the argument, tears and pouting.

Most parents don't do this. They give in. All

children learn is where your "buttons" are and how to push them. They quickly learn when to cry, apologize, argue or get mad. If you're a soft touch for a sincere apology, your children will be the best apologizers in the world. They will learn nothing about the importance of doing their chores, honoring agreements with others.

Some parents don't give in, but they make a different kind of mistake. They stand their ground, but they listen to everything the child has to say and answer every question endlessly.

The problem is, the child will never quit trying as long as you're still standing there. He thinks he's still got a chance to go to the movie as long as you're still listening. So, it will escalate. It will become an argument, then a fight. Soon, he's not even listening to what you're saying. He's just planning what to say next, trying to figure out what'll get you to change your mind.

It can be truly hard to be firm in the face of a sweet, teary-eyed child who is literally begging you to let him go to the movie. You may also dread your child's mood the rest of the evening if you don't let him go.

But you are doing the right thing.