



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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For the record, it's a tax grab

Lost in the controversy swirling around Sheila Copps' tardy and teary-eyed departure from Parliament Hill (if only temporarily) was her parting shot at taxpayers in the form of a levy on the purchase of blank audio tapes.

Just before leaving for the campaign in Hamilton East, the now former deputy prime minister held a press conference to announce Ottawa plans to force taxpayers to cough up another 70 to 80 cents for every blank cassette that they buy.

According to the Liberal government's spin doctors, the levy is intended to compensate recording artists for the revenues they lose through the private copying of their work from original CDs, records and tapes, onto blank cassettes. Ms Copps claims it's a royalty payment.

But, as witnessed by the GST debacle, Ms Copps' assertions are not always what they seem. In fact, the tax on tapes is really just another twisted but ingenious grab designed to buy votes from yet another special interest group.

Here's how it works: Royalty payments are supposed to go directly to individual artists for every CD or tape that they sell.

But because there is absolutely no way of knowing who's copying which artists' CDs and how often, it is impossible to calculate which artist should receive how much of the supposed royalty tax.

So instead of paying the artists directly, the Liberals will be handing over the revenues garnered by the tax to so-called "professional collectives", or artist unions, who will then distribute the money as they see fit.

That's the deal. The tape tax will be raised to feed the pork-barrelling spending habits of the party in power in order to ensure that they retain the support of the "professional collectives" of

Let's
Talk
Taxes



with PAUL PAGNUELO

the entertainment industry. Without a doubt, a large portion of the take will be hived off by the bureaucracy as our tax dollars move through the system. Bureaucrats in Revenue Canada will be busily conferring with their pals over at the incongruously named Ministry of Canadian Heritage, who, in turn, will be shuffling paper off to the growing administrative arms of the "professional collectives".

The artists will be lucky to see a penny of the estimated \$35 million the tax is supposed to raise.

Now, in the grand scheme of things, you may not think that \$35 million is a lot of money — and that's exactly what the feds want you to think. While it may be true that Paul Martin didn't raise personal income taxes in this year's budget, he's been chipping away at taxpayers through little tax increases here and there over the past two and a half years — about \$7.3 billion worth.

This death-by-a-thousand-cuts strategy avoids a public outcry while still allowing Ottawa to milk taxpayers for all they're worth.

Sheila Copps understands this strategy all too well. And, unfortunately for taxpayers, she's likely to be back to make a few more incisions, tape tax and all, before she's finished.

QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY IN COURT...



Sheila doesn't deserve another chance in byelection

I hope Sheila Copps gets politically drawn and quartered in the June 17 byelection.

The woman has no credibility. What will it say about Hamiltonians if they re-elect her? How is it that anyone can vote for her? What do her promises mean? What value do her statements have?

Her vow to resign if the GST promise was not carried out meant just that. A clear-cut break with the government, because they are not fulfilling their agenda. It does not mean asking for a new mandate from your constituents, because you really don't want to quit.

What will she campaign on in the byelection? Her record?

First she refused to resign. Then she claimed the promise to abolish the GST had no validity because she made it during an election cam-



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paign. Apparently in Hamilton it's okay to mislead the electorate as long as it's within the confines of an election.

Then she said she would not quit because she did not want to inflict a byelection on taxpayers. Oh, so why then was it okay a few days later? She didn't resign out of conscience, she resigned due to pressure.

Most politicians manage to make their promises with a safety valve. They later claim fundamentals have changed, or new information is available, and the issue requires more scrutiny. They stick to the letter of their promise but not the spirit.

This puts Canada at the top of a slippery slope leading to institutionalized corruption, similar to that in many other countries around the world. We cannot allow that to happen, and Sheila Copps has broken new ground when it comes to shattered promises.

Liberals have always been philosophically bankrupt and politically adept. They opposed wage and price controls to combat inflation in the 1970s and then instituted them. Liberals opposed a gasoline tax to help fund a national energy program in 1979 but then instituted one with a vengeance a few months after a general election.

Are they savvy politicians? Perhaps. However, they are not leaders. They simply fool the gullible electorate to assure their power and then pilfer the ideas of others to run the country.

This loss should weigh heavily on us

We can all identify a handful of highly influential people in our lives. They're the figures who have acted as guideposts along the winding road of life, whose teachings have molded us into the people we are today.

Maybe your generous nature stems from the next door neighbour who always lent a helping hand. Perhaps a piggy bank from your uncle has carved you into the savvy entrepreneur you are today.

In doing a survey of people's greatest influences, you would probably be hard-pressed to find anyone who did not have a teacher on their list.

Students pick up a lot more than historical dates and mathematical equations from their teachers. New passions are stirred and new possibilities unfold in the classroom. Words don't do justice to these intangible qualities, so instead I'll share my own experiences.

English is my favourite class, so there is little surprise in that my most influential teachers

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Seeks



with ANDREW HYDE

taught this subject. In grade 10 my English teacher doubled as an art teacher. He taught me how colourful literature could be, and kindled my previously dormant imagination.

My grade 11 English teacher was a tremendous influence on me as well. At a time when I took no real pride in my work, she taught me to be proud of the things I had written. She urged her students to send their work away for publication, and she is the main reason my words appear before you right now.