



Midland OPP's motor launch General Williams on Georgian Bay

## The Great Vodka Boycott---a case of patriotism

### Shirley Whittington

When Russia marched recently into the land of the Afghans, did she really pull the wool over the eyes of the world?

No. And the world is reacting in some interesting ways.

A Canadian businessman has offered to subsidize any of his employees who want to trade their Russian made cars in on compacts of a different make. He says he hates to see those U.S.S.R.-made autos in his company parking lot.

In New York city, they're giving up Russian vodka.

A hardworking and intrepid journalist recently did a couple of hours of research in a bar in the Big Apple, and he discovered that many New Yorkers have boycotted Russian vodka in protest over the recent military move.

This doesn't mean that Gotham guzzlers

are giving up vodka altogether, but bartenders are now reaching for bottles of Polish Canadian or Chinese vodka. (Yes, Chinese. It's called Great Wall and I hear a lot of people just can't get over it.)

This boycott is a matter of patriotism. Witness this conversation between the journalist and one well-oiled patron.

Journalist: "Are you giving up Russian vodka to demonstrate your patriotism?"

Patron: "Patriotism? You listen to me buddy. I don't care what bar I patronize. I'm never touching the Russian stuff (hic) again."

It's heartening to know you don't have to be an Olympic athlete to register your displeasure over what happened in Afghanistan. I like to think of that bar full of flabby non-athletic drinkers, putting back shots of Chinese vodka and declaring muzzily,

"There. That'll show 'em. Wherza soya sauce?"

Whether this will make the Russians scurry backwards out of Afghanistan like a film run in reverse, I don't know. I doubt it, but at least it makes the average citizen feel as if he's making an impact on international politics.

It's an idea that could spread in many directions. So many restaurants feature salad bars these days. I would hope to see a note on the menu indicating that until further notice, Russian dressing would not be served.

Is it possible that Russian Roulette will be eliminated from the monthly statistical reports of the suicide prevention bureaus of the nation? Will North American veterinarians refuse to treat Russian Wolfhounds?

Personally I would be prepared to give up Tchaikovsky and ballet for a limited time although I'm not sure that it would do any good.

About 10 years ago I boycotted South African wine, and that country seems to be doing very well in spite of my politically motivated protest.

I would like to boycott Mexican tomatoes and California lettuce, if I could afford to buy them at all.

In the meantime, I keep wondering how far this boycott business could go. At the moment, the Iranians seem to be the world's bad boys. What can the average Canadian do to show the Iran that we disapprove of her intransigence?

You can't really get a handle on this until you remember that Iran used to be called Persia. Now — if you have a Persian carpet, you can either refuse to walk on it at all, or you can stomp angrily upon it every time you have a chance.

Perhaps you have a Persian lamb coat. Don't wear it for the next four months.

What's this? You say you have a Persian kitten? If it won't pass as Angora, trade it for a Siamese or Manx.

All in all, it's probably just as well that Russia invaded Afghanistan and not the other way round. Can you imagine millions of shivering Canadians giving up their afghans? Now that's what I call a cold war.

## Troubled farmers trouble me...

### Bill Smiley

I'm glad I'm not a farmer. I'm glad I'm not a number of things: a bar-tender, a doctor, a goal-keeper, a fighter, Chairman of the Treasury Board, among many others. But I'm particularly glad I'm not a farmer.

A bar-tender must cope with a low class of people, forever trying to tell him their sordid secrets.

A doctor must handle some of the lowest parts of the human anatomy: piles, bowels, ingrown toenails, seed warts on the sole.

A fighter, professional or merely domestic, must constantly be on guard against low blows, physical or vocal.

The Chairman of the Treasury Board is faced with trying to sell savings bonds at a low interest rate when everyone else — banks, trust companies, and jumped-up usurers of every color are offering the moon in interest.

But the farmer is faced with the worst low of all — low income, low prices, and the low opinion of the vast majority of lowly-informed people in the land.

A number of things has recently brought this to my attention, though I've known it, peripherally, for years.

Last Saturday, the Old Lady and I gazed, with the fascination of a rabbit facing a rattlesnake, at a tiny, prime rib roast of beef in the meat counter.

We turned simultaneously to each other and as I was blurting, "What the hell....," she was saying, "It's been two years." We bought the little beauty, we slavered as it roasted, and we attacked it when cooked like a couple of Eskimos who have been living on boiled moccasins for two months, and have finally killed a seal.

Lying groaning after the orgy, I began to think. The roast wasn't much thicker than one of the steaks you tossed on the barbecue ten years ago. It weighed 2.35 pounds. It cost seven dollars.

With whipped turnips, roast potatoes and onions, a little garlic rubbed in, and a salad, it was something you wouldn't be ashamed to serve Queen Elizabeth.

Then why was it such a big deal? Because we, like so many shortsighted, spoiled Canadians, have been shying away from the beef prices in the supermarket for a couple of years, without really thinking about it,

muttering, not really blaming the beef farmers, but feeling hard done by.

A bottle of whiskey of any decent brand, costs eight dollars plus, the price of three pounds of prime rib roast. Which would you prefer? Which takes more tender loving care? Which returns a decent profit to the producer?

In West Germany, people are paying seven dollars a pound for beef. If this happened in Canada, there'd be lynching parties running through the country-side, looking for beef producers.

Same day we bought the beef, I picked up a five pound bag of P.E.I. potatoes for 49 cents. Ten cents a pound. I'll bet you'd pay more for manure, if you wanted to green your lawn.

A pound of bread, shot through machines, is about seventy cents. A pound of butter, likewise, is up around \$1.45. A pound of eggs costs about forty cents. A quart of milk is ninety per cent water and costs around seventy cents.

A lousy lettuce, imported from California, costs a buck. Same for a bunch of asparagus. A pack of cigarettes costs more.

Six imported tomatoes, shipped from New Mexico green as bullets, and less tasty than mashed toe-jam, will run you nearly a dollar.

There's something crazy about our way of life, our prices, our values.

We pay \$1.25, and will eventually be paying \$4, to run a rusty piece of metal from here to there. There are about six middle-men: the Arabs, the shipping company, two or three governments, the trucking companies, the eventual dealer.

And we shudder as we walk past the meat counter and see that beef, choice, is \$3.38 a pound.

Would you rather have two gallons of gas or a pound of beef? Would you rather have a quart of rye or two and a half pounds of beef? Would you rather have a pack of fags or ten pounds of potatoes?

Perhaps I'm not making my point. Eggs and butter and cheese are right up there in price, but the farmer who supplies the milk is working for peanuts.

However, these products have some kind of control. After all, Eugene Whelan dumped sixty zillion rotten eggs on us a few years ago, and Canada can't give away its huge supplies of powdered milk.

But a lot of our farmers are being royally shafted: especially the meat producers and the poor devils who come up with our spuds.

Have you any idea of the capital cost, the heavy interest, and the horse labor that goes into producing a pound of beef or a pound of potatoes?

I thought not. I'm glad I'm not a farmer.