

Editorials

Information-honestly, openly and freely shared
is the hallmark of democracy

Coming down hard on smokers

IF THERE WAS ever a time for smokers to consider giving up cigarettes, it is now.

Finance Minister Michael Wilson has raised the federal tax on a pack of cigarettes by 25 cents. The price of a pack of 25 cigarettes with the new tax is in the \$2.65-\$2.70 range. The pack a day smoker can expect to spend an extra \$90 a year on cigarettes. (The pack a day smoker can expect to spend just under \$1,000 a year on cigarettes - that's \$2.68 times 365).

Adding to the tobacco tax is something governments do with regularity. In Canada, we are accustomed to increases on tobacco at budget time, but usually a few cents a pack. Mr. Wilson's added levy is very hefty.

Mr. Wilson said his increase was substantial and said he recognized the health hazard of smoking. This makes the increase more justifiable, he seemed to be saying. The big hike in tobacco taxes, though, raises another point.

If the federal government departments sat down and figured out a way to do it, they could be directing added taxes on cigarettes to the health care field, and specifically, to the treatment of people with smoking-related illnesses. Presumably, heavy smokers cost every taxpayer more money in added health care budgets. If they are going to smoke, they should be prepared to chip in to health care budgets every time they buy a pack of cigarettes. This approach, at least, would make paying close to three dollars for a pack of cigarettes a little easier to swallow for smokers. Smokers would probably recognize that this would be a reasonably fair application of the 'User pays' approach.

As it is now, there is something vaguely cowardly about hiking the cost per pack by 25 cents, throwing the money into the federal government's over-all pot, and mouthing platitudes about the health risks of smoking. As well, the higher price doesn't necessarily have the effect of reducing the number of smokers.

Rising tobacco taxes hit the lowest income earners the hardest. Regardless of how much it costs for cigarettes, the low income smoker will do without other things, if need be, to buy cigarettes. For high income smokers, it is more a source of annoyance.

If governments are genuinely trying to take aim against smokers by raising the price of cigarettes, extra monies reaped from tobacco sales should go directly into educating people about the health risks and into health care for smoking-related illnesses.

Having said this, this is still a good time to consider giving up cigarettes.

Interesting and historic

"THESE ARE interesting times," NDP leader Bob Rae said on election night in Ontario less than one month ago. Interesting indeed, and historic.

Interesting because of the closeness of the May 2 election results; historic because of Mr. Rae's announcement on Friday that he and his party would throw their support behind the Liberals when the provincial legislature reconvenes, thus, in all likelihood, ending 42 years of Conservative rule in Ontario. Since Mr. Rae said a deal had been struck between the NDP and Liberals, a coalition-style government made up of the two Opposition parties is likely to be formed.

Lieutenant-Governor John B. Aird is likely to allow the formation of a coalition government once the Opposition parties move a motion of non-confidence in Premier Frank Miller's government. It is unlikely Mr. Aird would grant a request by the premier to dissolve the legislature to make way to a new election armed with the knowledge a coalition would probably survive for at least two years.

It is not over yet though for the Conservative dynasty. There is a chance Mr. Aird would grant a dissolution. If he doesn't the Ontario Tories will hardly become a spent force.

Ontario political history shows the Tories to be amazingly resilient after sitting for short spells on the Opposition benches.

If it all comes to pass, "Opposition Conservatives" will be a term that is going to take some getting used to.



Berry-picking time

Dear Editor:

Today I went shopping on Eglinton Avenue and there were fresh strawberries.

They looked so fresh that I bought a quart-sized box and for only \$1.59. This reminded me of in about the years 1920 to 1923 when my parents lived on the farm near the Evergreen School.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Bill Robins, Sr. lived across the road from us. They had several acres of strawberries and we, as school kids, went over to help them.

They paid us three cents a quart box and we earned a few cents a day. That sum seemed to be like owning a bank. I suppose that during the whole berry season we earned a little over a dollar. We thought we were rich.

I can recall one day when we had earned over a dollar, I and my younger brother, Albert, walked

to Wyebridge with our wagon and I bought a pair of leather sandals for myself for .98 cents and a little jack knife for my brother. We walked back home happy as punch. I don't know how that price compares with today's prices but I am willing that it all can be multiplied by at least five.

If someone were to ask me to pick berries today, my answer would be "No, I'm too old for that now." As I recall the berry picking time begins in mid-June. So it won't be long the berry pickers will be out in full force.

This reminds me of cow-milking but that is another story which I will tell you some day.

Sincerely yours,

-Margaret Moreau.

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Toronto, Ontario

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Hot item: Senate reform

Dear Editor:

The federal government's recent Senate reform proposals will give Canadians the worst of both worlds: a neutered Senate which remains an appointed haven for patronage.

We warned six months ago in a position paper, by quoting former Prime Minister Lester Pearson, that "When he has an assured majority in the Commons, the Canadian prime minister is the

nearest thing to a dictator - if he wants to be one".

This government's proposal will abolish the Senate in all but name by limiting its power to delaying bills by a month or six weeks. It refuses to consider the direct election of Senators, despite the recommendation of this by a Parliamentary study of Senate reform last year. Instead, the Senators will be appointed half by the federal government and half by provincial governments.

This proposal will guarantee that Western and Eastern Canada, as the two least populous regions, will be at the mercy of the two central Canadian provinces in Parliament - the power base which gave us the National Energy Program and protectionist trade policies for Central Canada.

This is a case of the politicians against the people: this government doesn't trust Canadians enough to give to them direct voting power to elect Senators.

Yet these same Canadians trusted PC candidates last fall enough to give them a massive mandate.

An independent poll of Ontario voters during the last federal election campaign, commissioned by the National Citizens' Coalition, showed that 76.5 percent of decided respondents favoured an elected Senate with equal representation from the provinces.

We urge the federal government to think again about Senate reform.

Yours sincerely,

-Colin Brown,

President,

National Citizens' Coalition.

Prince George wants you

Dear Editor:

City of Prince George, B.C. is celebrating its 70th Anniversary in 1985 with a special Homecoming, Aug. 2 to 11.

Former residents of the city now living throughout the world, are being encouraged to return to Prince George anytime during the summer, but specifically during Homecoming events.

The theme of "LOOK AT US NOW" emphasizes the growth and development of our community to an active industrial centre of over 70,000 residents.

A wide variety of events and activities are planned, and reduced rates on travel and special Homecoming memorabilia will also be available.

For information on Homecoming '85 in Prince George, B.C. interested readers are encouraged to write to either of the following:

Prince George Promotion Society

1100 Patricia Blvd.

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C.

V2L 3V9

Visitor & Convention Bureau

1198 Victoria Street

PRINCE GEORGE, B.C.

V2L 2L2

P.S. Even if you are unable to come home this year, we would like to hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

PRINCE GEORGE PROMOTION SOCIETY

Rod Maides

PRESIDENT

Letters

The Penetanguishene Citizen welcomes Letters to the Editor. They must be legible, signed (by hand), and carry the writer's address and telephone number for verification. Pen names are not allowed and anonymous letters will not be published. Letters published by this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this newspaper, its publisher or editor.

Penetanguishene Citizen

Published by Bayweb Limited every Tuesday at
74 Main Street, Penetanguishene, Ontario / 549-2012
Second Class Mail Registration Number 2327

Publisher: Andrew Markle
Editor: Peter Spohn
Editorial Staff:
Douglas Reed
Murray Moore
Paul Sanderson

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