

Editorial Page

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Winter leads to nastier things...

Last Thursday, Feb. 2, was groundhog day and, predictably, he didn't see his shadow. So, as the tale goes, winter will last another six weeks.

So tell me something I didn't already know. I mean, with the massive depths of snow we're buried in, and the freezing cold arctic blast of weather we had last week, only a dyed in the wool optimist would have said otherwise.

Actually, we'll be lucky if there are only six weeks of winter left. It's probably going to be more like another eight weeks of winter we're in for - and even that may be an optimistic prediction, although I certainly hope not.

It's kind of ridiculous though. The groundhog, which was brought out in Toronto to search for its shadow, had to be placed on a white piece of cardboard to replace snow - since there is no snow in Toronto.

And because no shadow was observed, the tale says there will be six more weeks of winter.

I can't figure it out. If there's no snow on the ground in Toronto, how can they have another six weeks of winter. What winter, I ask myself?

As for here, at least we haven't had the ridiculously cold temperatures Western Canada has been suffering through, although -30 C isn't the most comfortable temperature to experience, it's better than -50 or -60.

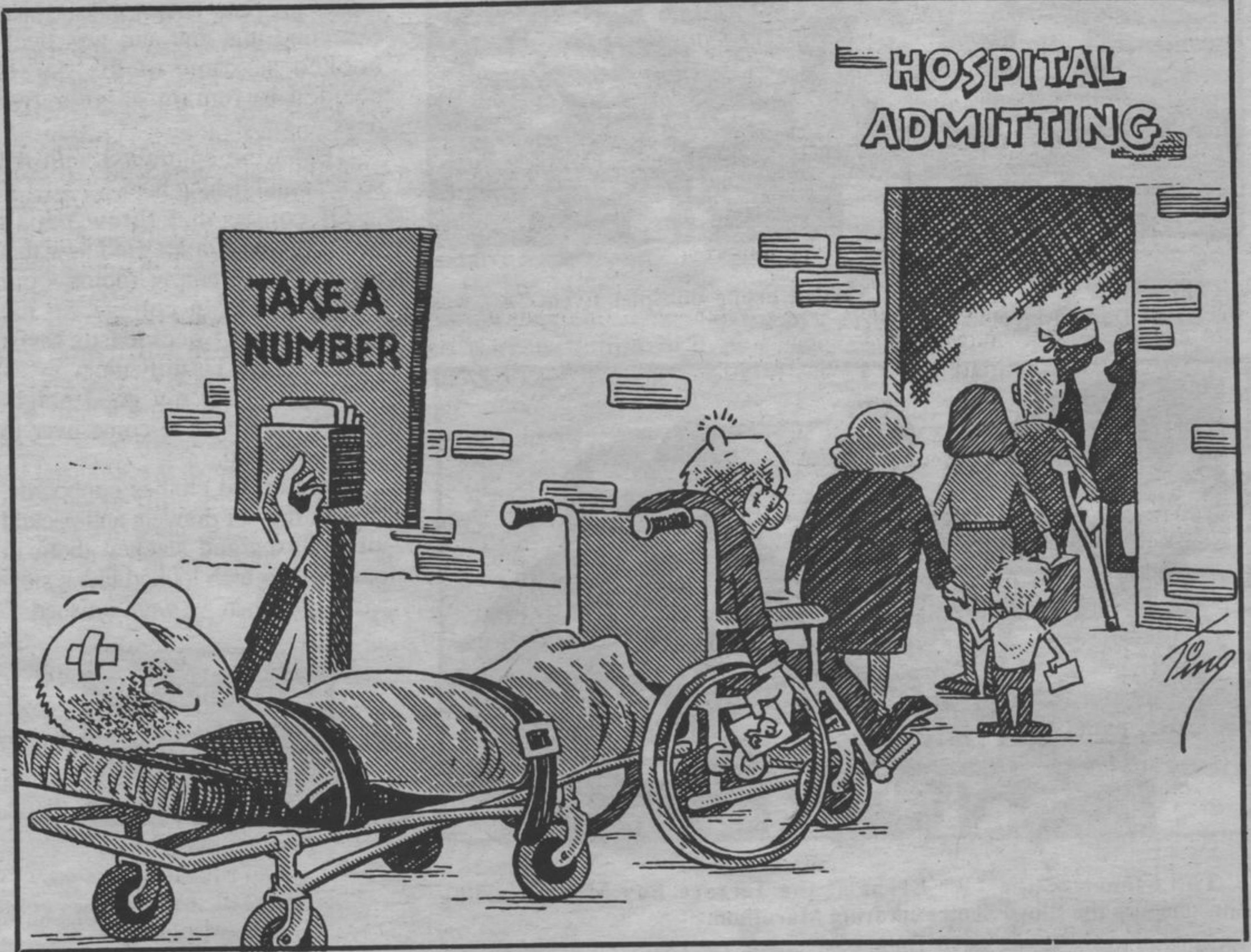
In that kind of weather, tires freeze, exposed flesh freezes in a mere 30 seconds, and, unfortunately, people have died shovelling the large amounts of snow accompanied with the cold.

But with the welcome passing of winter, then it will be time for the messiest season of the year - spring.

With all the snow this year its going to be a really slushy spring too. All the sand and salt spread on the roads to make for safe driving will make a mess of boots and clothes alike.

And if the warm weather hits us too suddenly, there will surely be flooding accompanied with it.

Shortly afterwards, the trees will begin to sprout their lush green leaves and then something as bad as mounds of snow will descend upon us like the plague - good old black



flies (of the dipterous family Simuliidae), also known as Buffalo gnats, and mosquitoes (Culex pipiens) - the females of which suck the blood of man and beast alike.

If only the females suck blood from warm blooded creatures, I've always wondered what the males feed upon.

From what I hear from people, the black flies aren't too bad since the wind coming off the lake tends to keep the blood thirsty suckers away. But, apparently, the mosquitoes are massive - the size of Mack trucks I understand.

Okay, so maybe I exaggerate just a tad, but I have heard the mosquitoes are quite large around here. Close to the size of a refrigerator.

I guess it's a trade off. Either bone chilling weather and the endless shovelling of snow, or blood thirsty insects.

But I'm getting ahead of myself worrying about pests of the summer, considering, as I said, there are still two months of winter waiting ahead.

Letters to the Editor are always welcome. Please address your letters to:

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In order that we may verify authorship, please include your name and phone number.

Feel free to use this forum to express comments, appreciation, inform or advise people on anything of public interest.

When is it right to use drugs?

"If drugs are the answer, what was the question?"
Anonymous

This is a story about drugs. Two stories really. The first story is about Bill Werbeniuk, the most famous snooker player to come out of Winnipeg and one of the best in the world. Bill's been racking them up and potting them professionally for the past 15 years.

But not for much longer, it seems.

Bill has a drug problem.

Oh, it's not coke or heroin or speed or hashish.

Bill takes Interdal.

Interdal doesn't turn you into a sex maniac or make you giggle or write jazz poems or see God. All it does is stabilize the body's sugar levels. Without Interdal, Werbeniuk can virtually fall asleep in the middle of a snooker shot.

Bill Werbeniuk's never made a secret of his dependency on

Interdal. He gets the stuff by prescription and has admitted as much to the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association.

The Association Poobahs have been equally forthright -- they have banned Werbeniuk from playing professional snooker for as long as he continues to take Interdal.

Then there's the story of Carl Cosack.

Carl is not a professional athlete -- doesn't even own a pool cue. He runs a 220-acre farm just 50 miles northwest of Toronto where he and his wife Suzy raise beef cattle. Successfully, too. The Cosack farm moves about 1,500 head of cattle from feedlot to supermarket every year.

But Carl Cosack cattle have a drug problem.

They don't use any.

Meat from Cosack cattle is marketed under a special brand name -- "Clean and Lean". You

can't find it in every store and you'll pay about 12 cents on the dollar more for it when you do, but you can be sure of one thing:



Arthur Black

You are buying meat. Not meat plus antibiotics, not meat plus steroids, not meat plus unnamed "growth accelerators" -- just meat. Customers who've tried it say that Cosack meat

tastes better, too.

All of which has made Carl Cosack a folk hero among his fellow beef producers, right?

Hah.

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association has slammed Cosack and by implication, any other beef producers flirting with so-called "natural" beef. "We will not accept any claim that (the meat) is superior or safer -- it is not," says an executive vice-president of the CCA.

Well, perhaps not, but the combined agricultural expertise of western Europe would seem to disagree -- the European Community has banned the import of virtually all U.S. and Canadian meat products precisely because they're full of the stuff Carl Cosack refuses to put in his.

So what is the message our kids get about these drugs? That they're okay on the dinner plate but not in our athletes' urine?

When it comes to drugs, I think we're getting . . . well, dopier instead of smarter. A few months ago, an American bible thumper got front page treatment with the accusation that cartoon hero Mighty Mouse was actually a coke addict. Seems that in one strip, the muscular rodent was revived from a faint by sniffing a flower. The righteous reverend thundered that the flower had to be full of cocaine.

What I want to know is, when is the FBI going to pull the plug on that other famous cartoon junkie? You know who I mean -- the evil fiend who carries his stash in a tin container right inside his shirt -- When he takes a snort, he's transformed into a raging, homicidal psychopath with superhuman strength and a passion to destroy everything around him.

What's that maniac's name again? Oh yeah, I remember. Popeye.