

Editorial Page

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VIA should be up not down graded

Recent rumors have been floating around Parliament regarding Michael Wilson's upcoming budget. It has been suggested that VIA's passenger rail service will fall under the knife in an effort to reduce the national debt.

Whether the passenger service will be eliminated altogether, or undergo a major revamping is still speculation at this point, but either way things do not look good for train travellers at the moment.

The government pumps hundreds of millions of dollars into the Crown corporation every year to keep it on its feet. Aging equipment, derailments, iced tracks and a small volume of passengers (which has only recently started to increase), keep VIA from being a money maker.

In Northwestern Ontario, passenger rail service is essential. Few people relish the thought of sitting on a bus for an extended trip when they can take the train which offers the chance to move around, sleep comfortably and enjoy a full meal.

And compared to the cost of flying (not to mention all the connections which must be made at various airports) VIA is a real bargain.

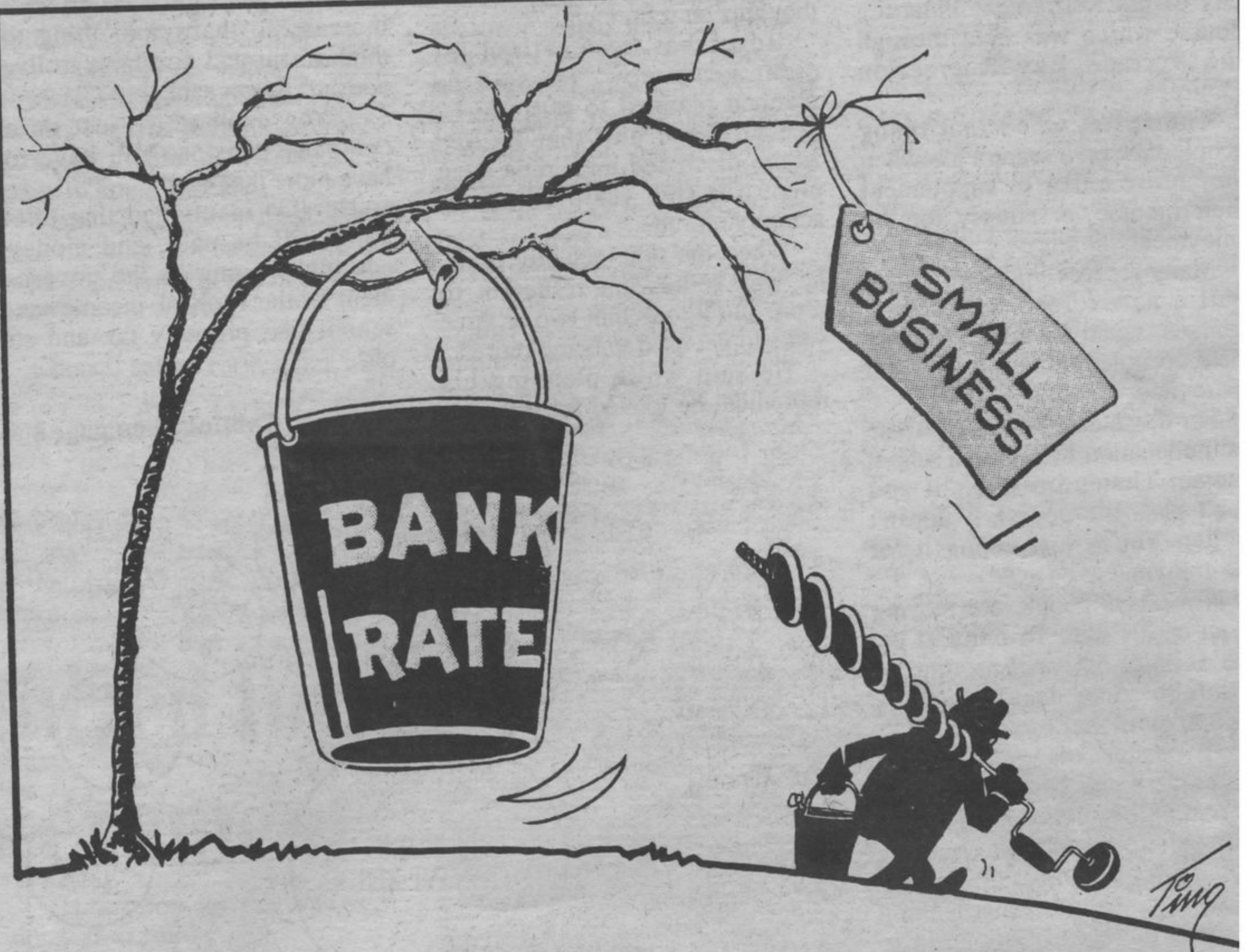
A report by VIA is to be released to the federal cabinet this June which will outline a number of options the government can take in running the Crown corporation for the next 20 years.

Among the options will be the expansion and modernization of existing services and routes, to eliminating passenger rail service for unprofitable routes altogether.

The money the government puts into VIA to keep it operating is your tax dollars. If you think it is a valuable service, one that should be kept, write or call your member of Parliament, Reginald Belair, and let him know your feelings.

It is only through the concern which constituents express that our government representatives can make an effort to fulfill the wishes of the voters.

Let's hope that passenger rail service will continue in the North, and improve.



"IT'S NOT MY IDEA... OHIP NEEDS THE MONEY!"



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

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

Feel free to use the forum to express comment, appreciation, inform, criticize, or debate issues of anything of public interest.

"What's in a name?" asks Arthur Black

Do you realize that if I'd been born in Spain, I'd be illegal?

That's because Spain has very strict regulations about what Spanish parents can call their children. The rule of thumb is that anything goes, as long as the name of at least one saint appears in the moniker. That's why so many of them answer to "Pedro", "Maria" or "Antonio". Some Spaniards play it safe and "load up" on extra names -- such as don Alfonso de Borbon y Borbon, the great-great-grandson of Carlos III. Don Alfonso died in 1934 -- possibly crushed by the weight of his own birth certificate which contained 94 Christian names.

Black, Arthur, Raymond doesn't cut it in Spanish circles.

A lot of nations take a proprietorial interest in the naming of their citizens. Until 1970, the names of all French children had to be chosen from an approved list at the Ministry of the Interior. In Russia, the name "Melor" has enjoyed the

official nod of approval for over half a century. It's an acronym of Marx, Engels, Lenin, October Revolution. The government there recently issued a decree announcing that Cuban babies will henceforth have short, simple names, easy to pronounce and not likely to cause embarrassment to the child.

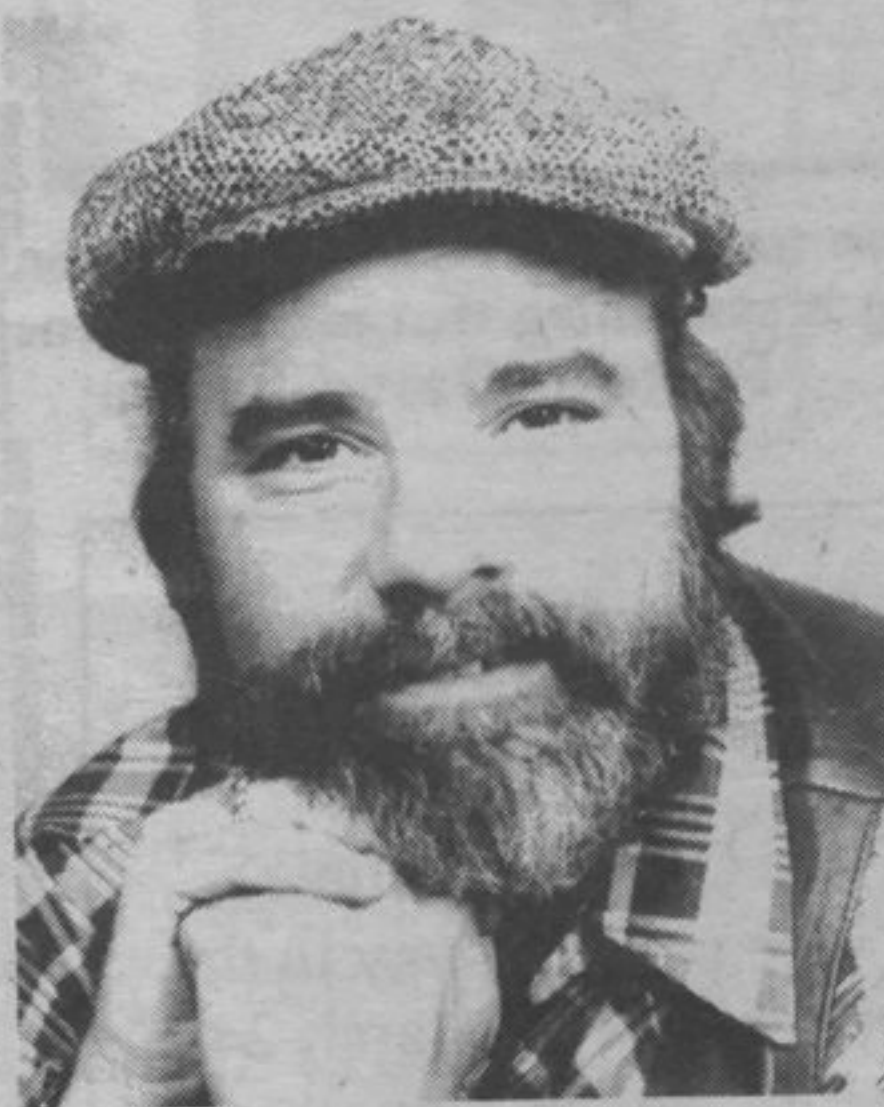
Good news, no doubt, for the recently born Cuban twins whose mother had tried to name them Biela and Propela.

"Propela" means "propeller", while "biela" is Spanish for "connecting rod".

Americans, too, have certain rules about what people may and may not call their children. You would assume that pretty well anything goes in a country which gives the official nod to "Dweezil" and "Moon Unit" (the real names of rock star Frank Zappa's kids) -- but that's not the case. It took Ellen Cooperman three years of difficult and expensive litigation to convince the judges to allow her to shed

her name and all the oppressive male chauvinist baggage that went with it.

She finally won. Send your congratulatory telegrams to Ellen Cooperperson, New York,



Arthur Black

New York.

Mister Michael Herbert Dengler, on the other hand, was less fortunate. The Minnesota State Court unsympathetically quashed his attempt to change

his name to, as his lawyer so poetically described it: "one that symbolizes his interrelationship with society and reflects his personal and philosophical identity."

Mister Dengler wanted to change his name to "1069".

You would think that Great Britain, that mighty cradle of free speech, would let its citizenry name its kids just about anything they liked, but Audrey and Hugh Manwaring-Spencer have discovered differently.

Recently the Manwaring-Spencers, who live on the Isle of Skye, had a daughter. The parents notified the British Registrar of Births what they wished to name their child. To wit: Princess Dulcima Rosetta Manwaring-Spencer.

A few months later, the parents received a letter informing them that their daughters' name was illegal.

"Based upon an Order in Council" the letter huffed, "the name Princess is not a

recognized forename in this country because it is part of the Crown's royal prerogative."

In other words, the name Princess was verboten because it might tick off the Queen.

But the Manwaring-Spencers are a doughty tribe. They wrote to Buckingham Palace asking if, in fact, Elizabeth would be badly put out, knowing that a wee Scottish lass on the Isle of Skye answered to the name Princess.

A royal aide wrote back: "You may rest assured that you have caused no offence to the Queen and you may continue to use the word as your daughter's Christian name."

Wonderful news for Princess Dulcima Rosetta.

Not to mention entertainers like Prince, King Kong, and the rock group Queen.

And if anybody comes across the hero of that old Gene Chandler rock and roll classic tell him it's alright.

The Duke of Earl can come out of hiding.