

Editorial Page

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Economy must be diversified

Last week, a meeting was held in Schreiber to discuss the possibilities of forming an Economic Development Organization in the Terrace Bay/Schreiber area. Businesses from Jackfish to Pays Plat were all invited to attend the meeting.

It was a disappointing turnout to say the least. Only a handful of business people bothered to show up - a couple from Schreiber and half-a-dozen from Terrace Bay. Reeve Jim Ziegler and councillor John St. Amand from Terrace Bay, and Reeve Mike Cosgrove and councillor Ed Borutski from Schreiber also attended the meeting.

The idea behind forming an Economic Development Organization is to determine and plan the economic future of the two communities. To try to diversify the economy so it is not as dependent upon the major employers of the area.

In light of the small turnout, it seems business people in the area are too complacent. With a relatively good economy at the present time, they don't appear to be worried, or even concerned about the future.

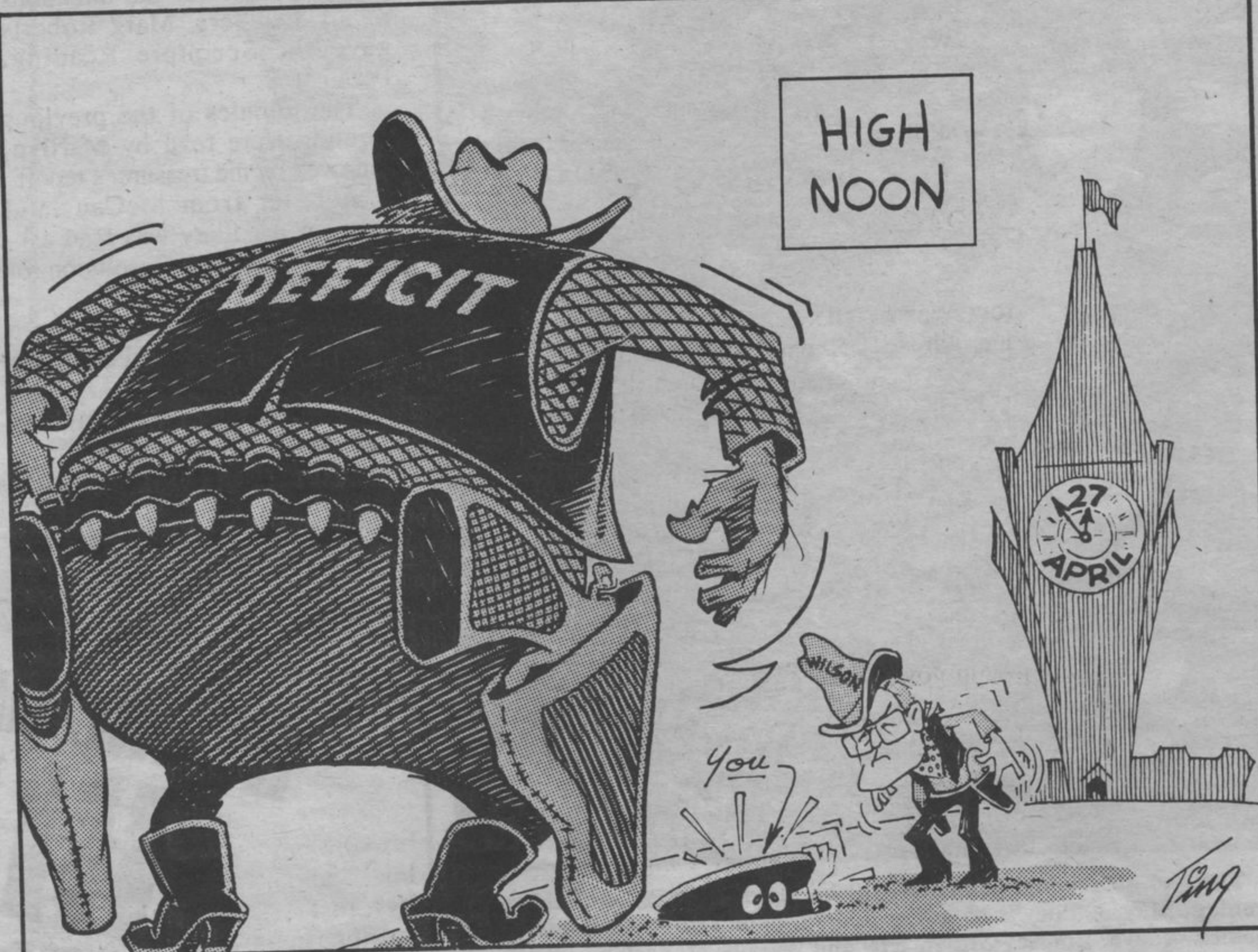
But it's dangerous to sit back and say, "The economy is stable, why worry about it?"

Why worry about it? Because the mine, CP and possibly even KC won't be here forever. And waiting for these industries to close down and then doing something about it will be too late.

Single industry towns can't rely on the major employer to be in business forever. These towns have to prepare for the day when industry shuts down.

Attracting another major employer to the area isn't the way to go either. Major layoffs or a shutdown could occur and without a diversified economy the economic future would be bleak.

Statistics show that well over 75 per cent of new jobs formed in the last nine years were in small business (20 employees or less). Opening a number of small businesses would definitely be beneficial. The chances of all going out of business are slim, and the openings would help to diversify the economy. The area would no longer be as dependent on the major employers of the area and if a



shutdown or layoffs occurred, the effect would not be as disastrous.

During the past 40 years the service sector has grown from 33 per cent to 70 per cent of the labor force. In that same time period primary business (i.e. forestry, mining) has dropped from 33 per cent to 10 per cent of the labor force.

Without question it appears the service sector is the way to go. The Terrace Bay - Schreiber area would do well to pursue the service sector, and specifically tourism.

But it's not enough to say tourism should be attracted to the area. Questions such as how, what, why, where, and when must all be answered. Plans have to be developed and studies performed to determine the feasibility of various businesses opening in the area.

It takes years of planning to prepare, change the direction of and diversify an economy, and it's something that should be done in this area before major layoffs or shutdowns take place.

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 this forum to express comments, appreciation, inform, criticize, or debate issues of anything of public interest.

The Art of Going Forward Backwards

I imagine every Canadian citizen has opinions about politicians, but what about the other way around? What do politicians think of us?

Not much, I reckon.

How much respect was Prime Minister Trudeau showing at the end of his reign when he cynically tossed out corporate directorships and Senate hampocks to a rats nest of Liberal bagmen, hacks and hangers-on, just before he slipped out the stage door?

How much respect does Ed Broadbent show for the intelligence of the average Canadian citizen when he insists that, if elected the NDP would not be in any way beholden to the unions?

And then there's the Progressive Conservatives. The Tories must think Canadian citizens are just about the dumbest yokels ever to wander under the circus tent flap.

It just stands to reason -- if they had the slightest shred of respect for us they'd lie better.

This is the party that wooed the electorate with \$16 billion dollars worth of campaign promises. Four months after the ballots were counted, Michael Wilson, the man in charge of the piggy bank, said the government was 'reconsidering'.

This is the party whose leader, in 1984, assured the country in his rolling sonorous baritone "it affects Canadian sovereignty and we will have none of it, not during leadership campaigns or at any other time.

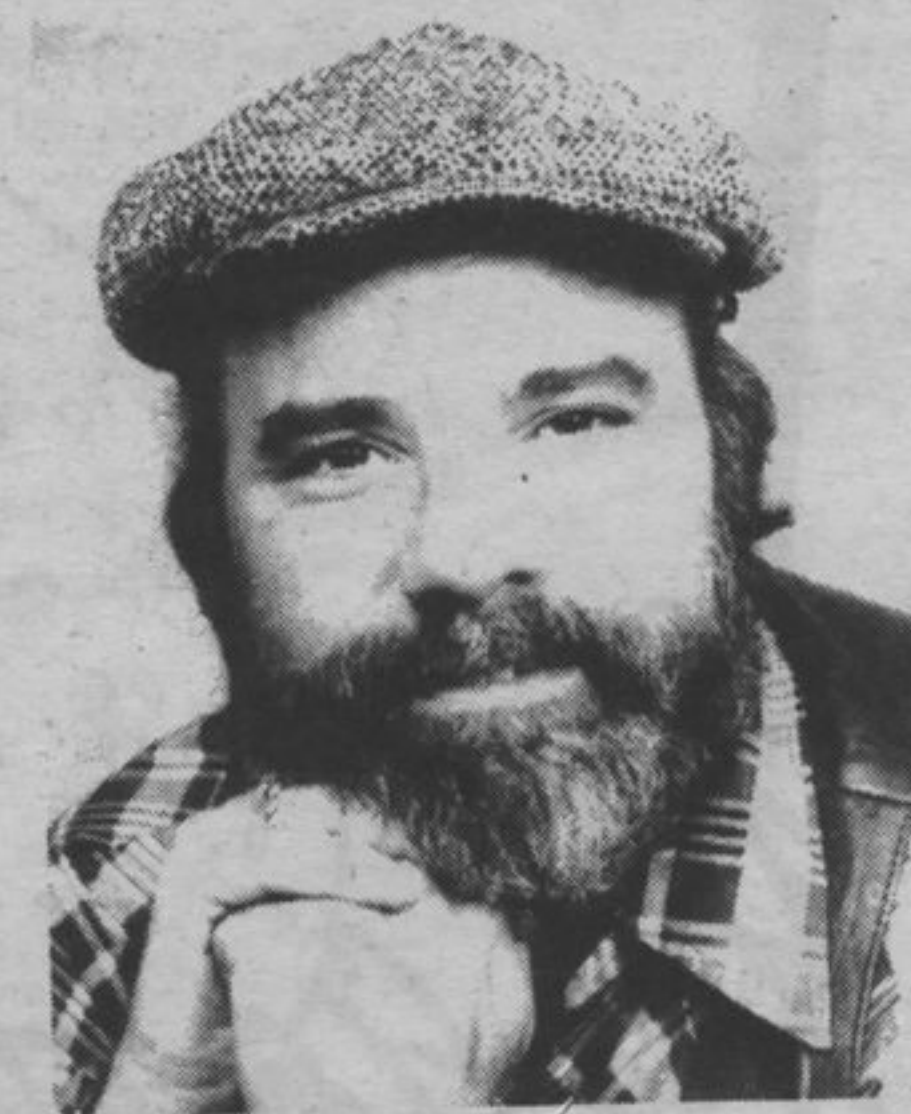
Mister Mulroney was talking about Free Trade.

On gaining power the Tories did a 180 and rammed the Free Trade Agreement through, without benefit of a national vote. Don't worry, the PM soothed the nation, a special commission will see to it that anyone who loses a job because of Free Trade will be compensated.

Last month, a further 'clarification': no compensation. You lose your job as a result of Free Trade, tough bananas.

Then of course there was that

other famous election promise made by Mister Mulroney. He got a lot of campaign mileage out of the issue. He hammered the Liberals for the way they'd mishandled it. He promised that



Arthur Black

when elected, the Tories would clean it up and make it work the way it was supposed to.

Remember how the Tories were going to save Via Rail?

As I write this, that poor old

swaybacked Clydesdale of a corporation Via is being trotted out to the auction block one more time. The bottom line boys from Bytown are considering just two options really: whether to send Via directly to the knackers yard or to hack yet another rump roast out of her and see if she can still walk.

Doesn't really matter which option they choose, they both amount to the same thing. I ride that old girl to work and back each week. Via's already got three bad legs and the dry heaves. One solid budget cut and she won't get up again.

Progressive Conservatives. Curious name for a curious group. Pierre Berton once said the name seems to mean "go forward, backwards". That fits the party's position on passenger rail service alright. While U.S., Japan, Europe, Australia -- even Brazil, for crying out loud -- are exploring and implementing high speed passenger trains as a response to clogged airports and overburdened road systems,

Canada is putting her passenger trains to sleep.

Going forward backwards.

The irony is, I don't think the government's even in charge. They're just errand boys for the corporate barons who would dearly love to unload their passenger rail responsibilities. After all, it's not CPR and CNR any more. It's just CN and CP. The 'R' had disappeared as the companies have diversified into more lucrative fields -- telecommunications, real estate, Thirs World investments. Look around you. While the Tories obediently fix a hemlock highball for Via, the railway itself is quietly tearing up tracks, pulling down bridges and selling off railway rights of way across the land.

The rail barons are renegeing on a Confederation promise and dismantling the central nervous system of the nation. Our government is holding their coats.

To their mutual everlasting shame.