

Editorial Page

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As Bob Barker says, "have your pet spayed or neutered"

I was up watching T.V. last Friday night and just about to go to sleep when a show about the Toronto Humane Society (THS) came on.

It was one of those programs that asks viewers to send in money so the society could continue with its work.

Being a pet lover, I decided to stay up and watch it. What an eye opener. Some of the scenes were truly disheartening.

Like the case where THS investigators were called to a scene of animal abuse. Strung up from the neck in someone's backyard were three cats.

And then there was a dog that had been hit by a car. The driver didn't bother to stop or report the incident and just drove on. Eventually, a passerby noticed the dog and called the THS. Veterinarians, judging by the extent of the infection that had set in, estimated the dog had laid in the ditch for five days. Luckily, they were able to save the animal.

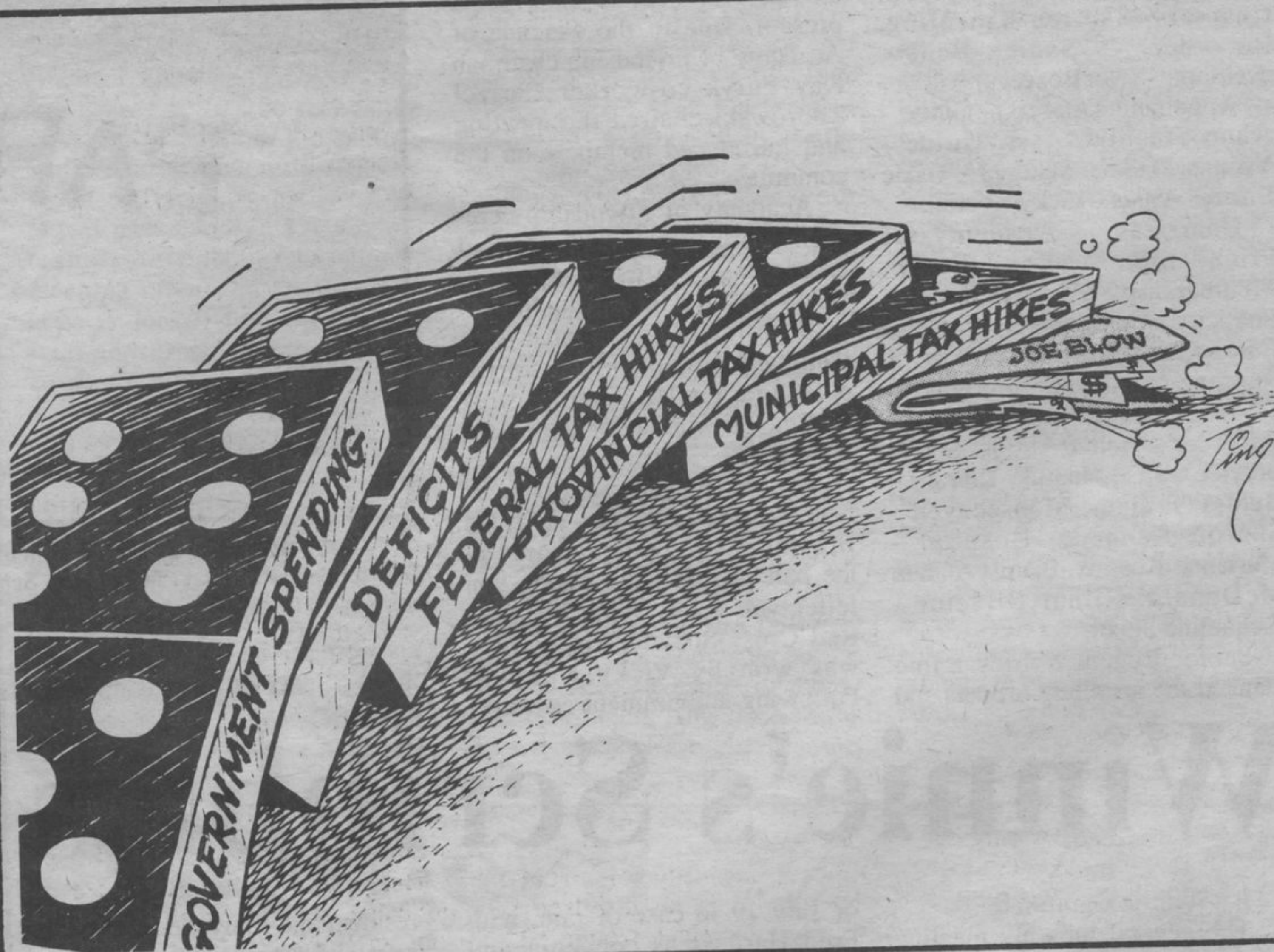
How people can be so cruel and thoughtless totally amazes me.

Of the 15,000 animals brought into the THS every year, over one-third have to be put to sleep. Many people consider the THS to be the thoughtless party when animals must be put down, but nothing could be further from the truth.

It's the unthinking owners of pets that are the ones to blame. For example, not having your pet spayed or neutered only adds to the thousands of homeless and unwanted animals that must be put to sleep.

It's not only Toronto having a problem with animals not being spayed or neutered.

All of North America is undergoing the same problem. Some people don't feel it's right to sterilize their pet. But is it right to let the animal breed, only to have it's offspring put to sleep?



At one point in the show, a scene of totally uninhibited breeding was shown. In one house alone, THS investigators found 43 dead cats and dogs - the result of the owner letting the animals continue to have offspring.

Being a pet owner is a privilege, not a right. And with this privilege comes responsibility. Have your pet sterilized. Give him or her the appropriate medical care (such as immunizations and treatment for diseases). Provide adequate food and shelter.

Having a pet is a responsibility that can last for a long time - don't abuse the privilege.

The News welcomes your letters to the editor. Feel free to express comments, opinions, appreciation, or debate anything of public interest. Write to:

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In order that we may verify authorship, please sign your letters.

Stonewall Albert bucking for Fame

*Out, out, brief candle
 Life's but a walking shadow,
 a poor player
 That struts and frets his
 hour upon the stage,
 And then is heard no more*

Depressing as they sound, those words, put in the mouth of Macbeth by Bill Shakespeare, pretty much sum up the curriculum vitae for 99 percent of humankind. We skitter around like headless chickens for our allotted span on this globe, then our ticket gets punched and we're on the fast track to oblivion. And what do we leave behind? Some friends. Some enemies. A few unreturned library books. With a little luck, a couple of bucks in the bank account to cover funeral expenses.

And that's about it for most of us. While we're alive we're the centre of the universe. We may amass fortunes, establish world records and be a household name from the Queen Charlottes to Witless Bay, but a couple of generations after they plant us in the marble

orchard, we have all the historical relevance of pond scum. As usual, the Bard said it best:

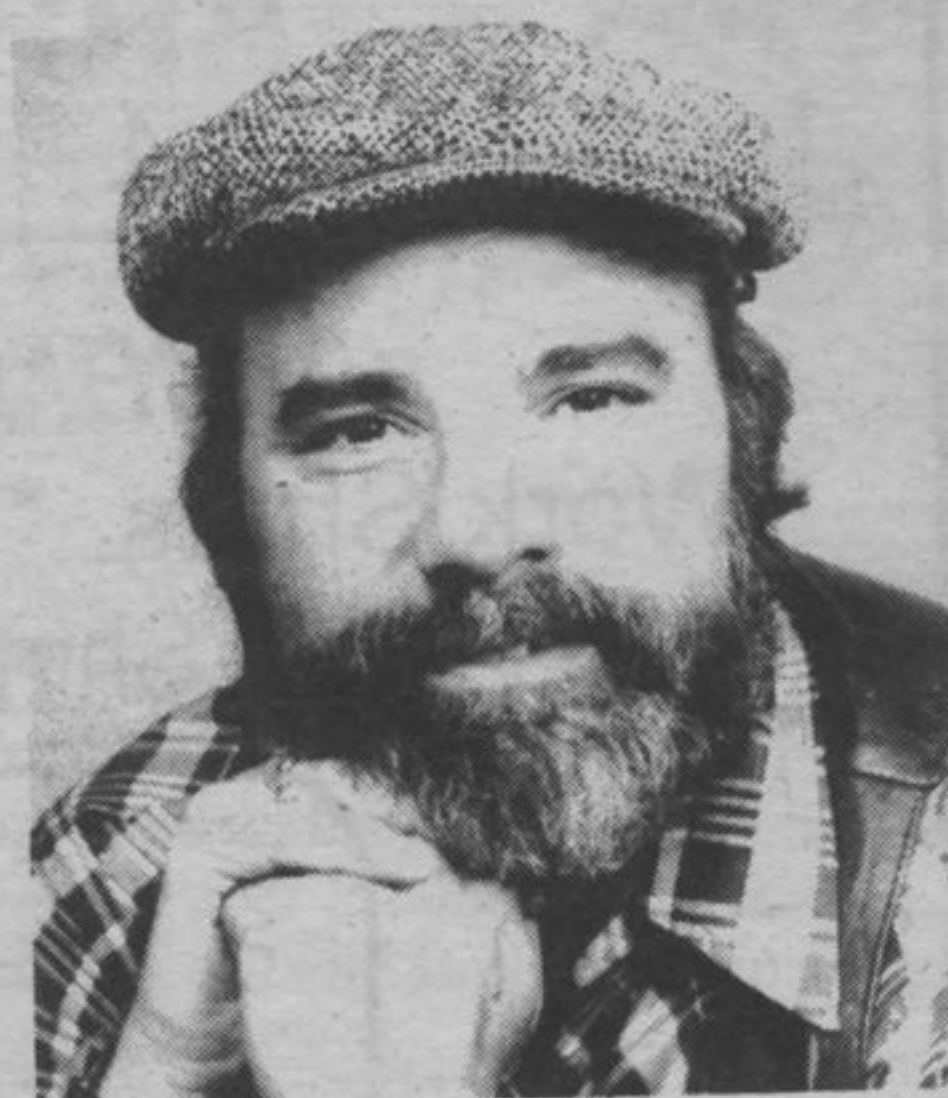
*Golden lads and girls all must
 As chimney sweepers, come to dust.*

So it goes for most members of the genus Homo Sapiens. But every once in a while someone comes along who isn't willing to settle for dust. Such a one is Albert Johnson of Smiley, Saskatchewan.

Albert is a farmer who works a big spread not far from the Saskatchewan-Alberta border, coaxing wheat out of the prairie soil. Some time ago, Albert decided that filling grain cars and raising a crop of kids--fine and noble pastimes that they are--were not enough. He wanted to leave something so that future generations would know that a man named Albert Johnson once passed this way.

So he took a rock--his farm had plenty to spare and they were just lying around on the ground not doing much of

anything--he took a rock and placed it next to another rock. Then he walked over and got another and another. He placed them beside the first one. Pretty soon Albert was working evenings and even getting up extra early in the morning to



Arthur Black

gather his rocks.

He piled those rocks for twenty-seven years.

You can see the results today if you happen to be driving past Albert's farm on the outskirts of Smiley, Saskatchewan. Albert's Wall stands six feet high and

nine feet wide at the base, tapering to two feet in width at the top. It runs from nowhere to nowhere for half a mile and there's not a dollop of cement or mortar to be found in it.

Over the years, Albert has added little refinements. He flattened out the top so that visitors can walk along the wall. He built a sod house at one end for shelter and he leaves a guest book inside for visitors to sign.

And visitors do come. Albert's registry book contains signatures and enthusiastic comments from tourists hailing from South Africa, Morocco and Argentina. So far, more than 3000 people have climbed Albert's Wall and signed Albert's book. Not a bad draw for the town of Smiley, pop. 111.

Not that the folks of Smiley have always been what you'd call solidly behind Albert Johnson's project. Oh, they didn't sneer or laugh at him or anything, but there have been a few eye rollings and head shakings over the past quarter of a century. Even Albert's wife

took to calling him "Stonewall Johnson" in a less than idolizing tone.

Didn't faze Albert. He just kept building his wall. Why? Albert won't say exactly. "I could tell you I built it to cut the wind" he muses, then adds with a chuckle, "but that would just be foolish, wouldn't it?"

Albert admits that the wall doesn't "keep anything out or hem anything in" but that doesn't seem to bother him either. And he thinks maybe the wall is about as big as it's going to get. He's 80 years old now and prefers watching tourists to hoisting rocks.

China has it's Great Wall, Scotland has Hadrian's Wall, and they're both higher and longer, but they were built with thousands of hands. The wall near Smiley was built with just two.

Here's to you, Albert Stonewall Johnson. May your handiwork delight visitors for years to come.

And dumbfound archaeologists in ages to come.