

# Editorial Page

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## Don't let opposition to the government fade away like the smell of an old pair of dirty sneakers

Excuse the headline, but I thought I'd better grab somebody's attention and get you thinking.

While it's only been a couple of weeks since the announcement regarding the VIA Rail cutbacks by Minister of Transportation Benoit Bouchard, the story is already beginning to fade.

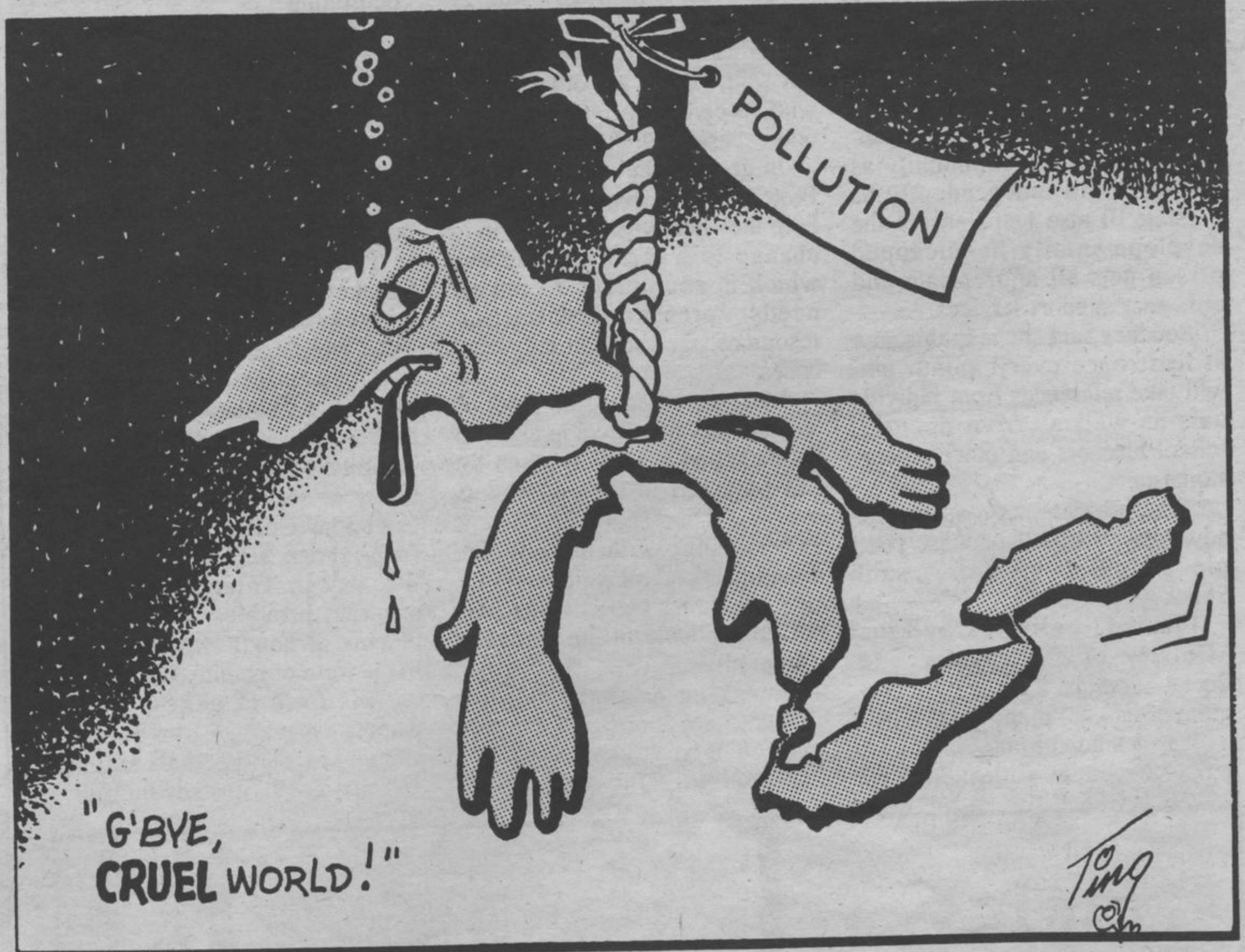
No longer are headlines proclaiming the cuts slapped on the front page and neither are stories concerning those groups who oppose the cuts.

In our fast-paced world it seems that's the way many stories and issues are treated - one day they're front page news, the next, the story is buried somewhere in the back of the paper.

But this is one story that shouldn't be forgotten. It's an issue that Canadians simply can't, nor should ignore and one which they must constantly let the government know how they feel.

Many Canadians complained loudly when the cuts were announced, but a mere two weeks later what are these same people doing about it? Like many people, they probably complained about the VIA cuts, maybe to their neighbors or co-workers, but with the daily routine called life one thing led to another and the anger was soon forgotten.

Sure, people may not like the actions of the government but they feel helpless to battle the bureaucracy. But get thousands and even millions of people believing this and it's no wonder the government feels it can get away with



anything it chooses.

It's these people that must take a stand and speak up for what they believe in.

Canadians have been described as being apathetic and sheep-like - simply accepting whatever the government throws upon them with little more than a wimper.

Are we really that pathetic? So spineless that we can't stand up for what we believe in and so timid we can't raise our voices to the government that supposedly represents us and say, "No damn way will I accept this".

Each time we don't speak up it makes it easier for the  
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## Old Georges had lots of stamina

Ah, September! Always a sweet 'n sour time of year with the end of holidays, the last gasp of summer, the denuding of crop fields and orchards and all that -- but the fall of '89 will go down in the tally books as a season of particular bittersweet poignancy, for this autumn marked the collapse of an entire industry. An industry by the name of Georges Simenon.

Who was he? Possibly the mightiest writing machine the world has ever spawned. He was born in Liege, Belgium in 1903, tried to become a baker for a few years, then chucked it and fled to Paris at the age of 20. There, he picked up a pen and discovered a facility that he never felt around the baking oven in Liege. In the next three years he turned out an astonishing 300 stories -- more than many aged authors manage in an entire lifetime.

He hadn't even hit his stride.

The words came faster and

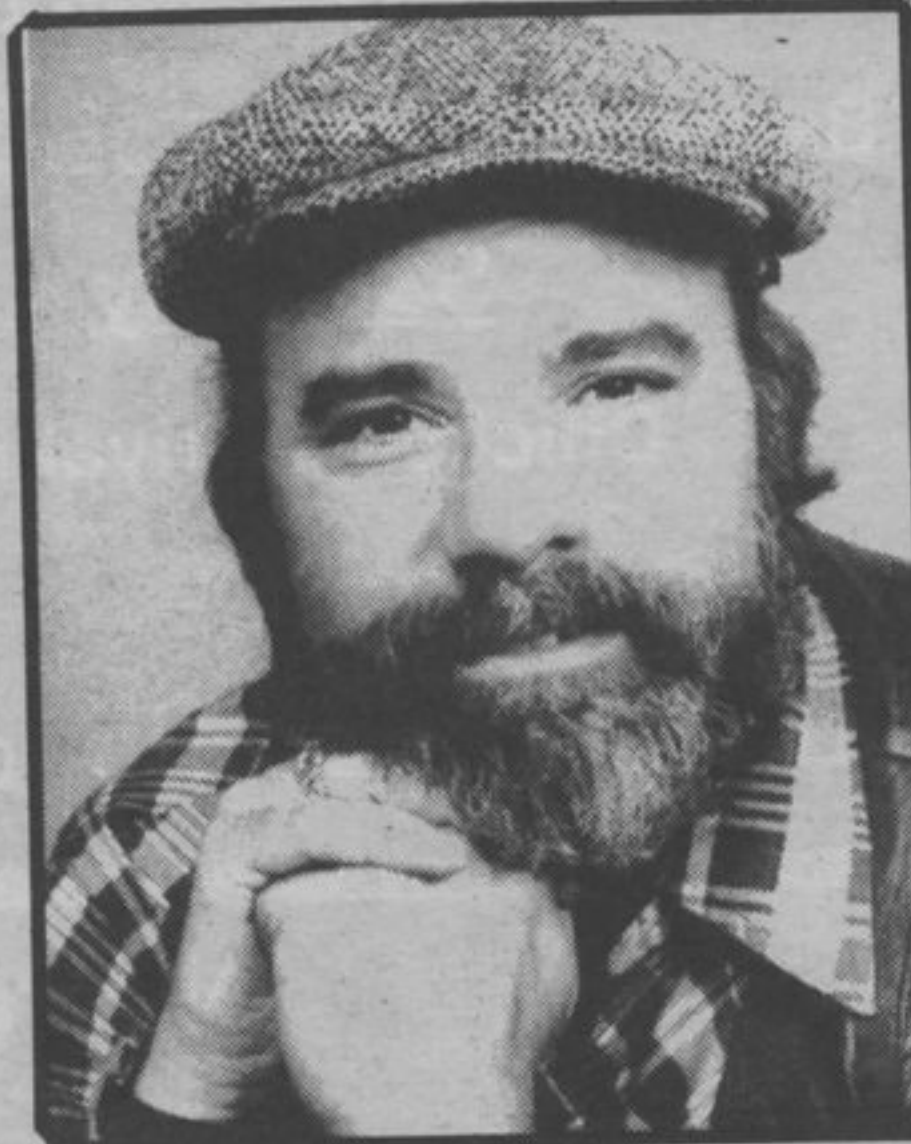
was churning out books under 17 different pseudonyms. Authors who can turn out one book over twelve months are considered prolific. During his best years, Simenon was plopping six completed manuscripts on his publishers desk, year in, year out.

Sure, the world has seen high volume hacks before -- quasi-literate prose packagers like Jacqueline Susanne and Harold Robbins mumbling their vapid, soft-porn plots into dictaphones at poolside -- but Simenon's works weren't like that. He wrote well. Extremely well. The French writer Colette became his champion 'way back in the twenties. And Andre Gide, one of France's most respected modern authors, called him "Perhaps the greatest and most genuine novelist of today's French literature."

Not everyone agreed. Some critics refused to believe that anyone who wrote so fast could be turning out anything

but trash. And Simenon did write fast. He told Gide that he could, if pressed, write a complete novel in three days.

Once, when Hollywood movie director Alfred Hitchcock telephoned for



**Arthur Black**

Georges he reached Madame Simenon instead. "I'm sorry" she said, Georges is writing and I would rather not disturb him."

"Let him finish the book" replied the unflappable Hitch. "I'll hang on"

And as if writing well at the speed of light wasn't accomplishment enough, Simenon held down another full time job to which he devoted at least as much attention as literature.

Seduction. Georges Simenon was a lady's man the same way that Georges Simenon was a novelist. He made Casanova look like a saltpeter addict. He made Frank Sinatra look like Pope John the 23rd.

You think I'm exaggerating? Not a chance. Simenon once confessed that he had slept with ten thousand women during his life.

Ten thousand! Why that's half the population of Sarnia or Port Alberni! Seventeen times the number of calvarymen who galloped in the Charge of the Light Brigade! More fans than the Toronto Maple Leafs could draw if they put Racquel Welch in goal. Why that's...

Hold on a second.

Let's just work out the logistics on this. Simenon was born in 1903, which means he probably didn't start his ummm, hobby until at least the age of 15, say? That would be 1918. And one presumes he relinquished his more strenuous avocation when he formally stopped writing in 1973. Which means Simenon had a period of 55 years in which to woo and bed ten thousand women. That works out to 181.8 women per year. Think of it! That's pretty well one brand new partner every two days! Think of the boxes of chocolates, the bottles of wine, the telephone calls...never mind the spats, the tiffs, the tearful restaurant scenes, the stammered explanations and the slaps across the face. Fifty five years of that! Phew! Rest in peace, Georges.

I don't know how you lived so long, or wrote so much, but I'm pretty sure I've figured out what you died of.