

Editorial Page

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Answering machines don't talk back

I recently joined the ranks of those who own an answering machine and am beginning to discover a few things.

First of all, it seems a lot of people, well over half, either don't have a message important enough to leave on the machine, or they absolutely hate talking into the thing.

Speaking from personal experience, it's probably the latter of the two. When answering machines first came out they were a real novelty. Now it seems almost everyone has one.

Anyway, I merrily went along my way and for years never encountered one in all my phone calls. But then the dreaded day came. One ring. Two rings. Three rings. Four.

"You've reached so and so. I'm not in right now but if you leave your name, number and message after the beep, I'll get back to you."

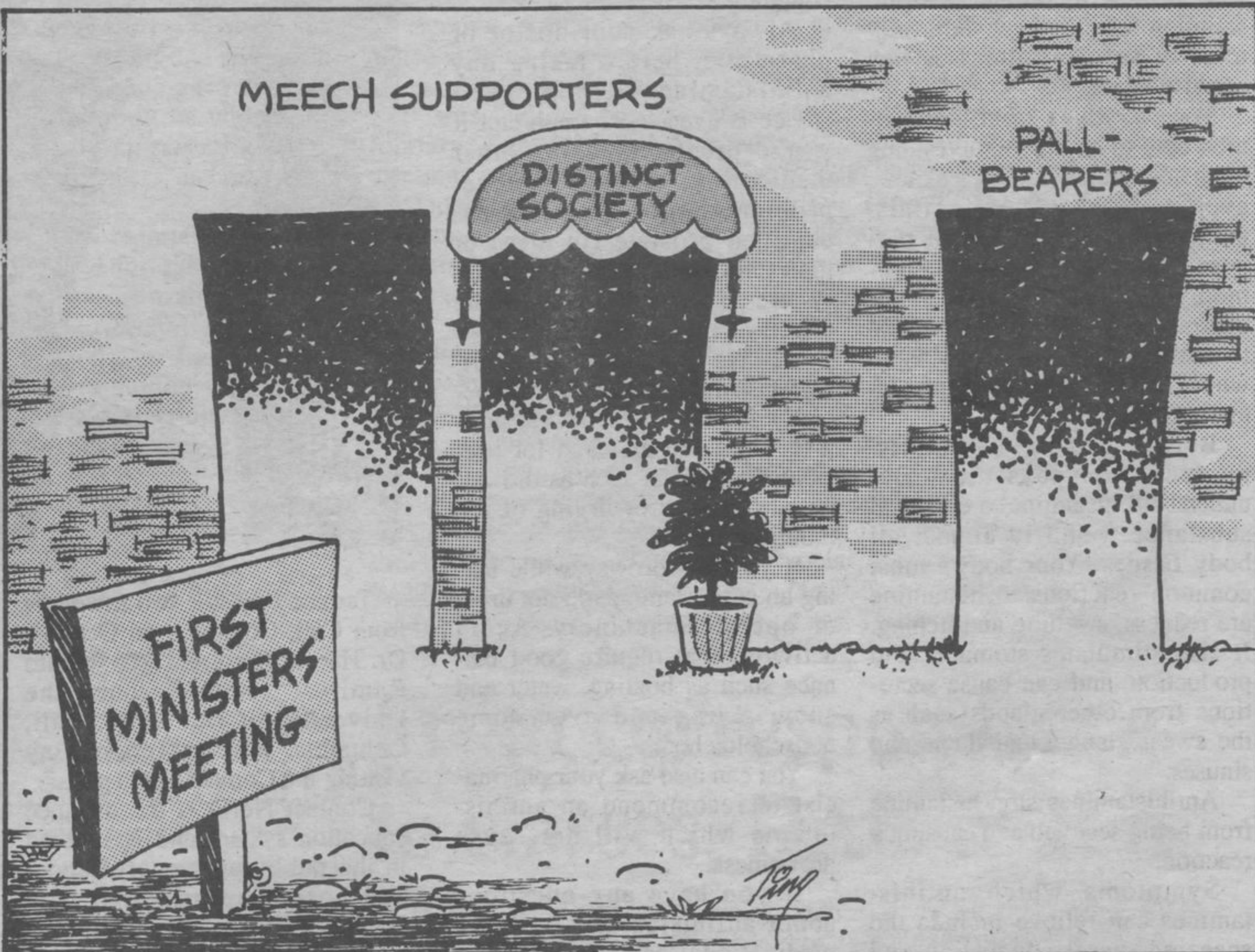
And then the beep came. I figured "no problem", I'll just leave my message and that will be that. But it wasn't that easy. Actually, it was kind of unnerving. Speaking into a phone to a machine that has been totally inappropriately named leaves a lot to be desired.

An answering machine. You can talk your head off into one of those things but I've yet to hear it answer me.

Now, whenever I encounter one of these machines I get ready for the feeling. It's almost enough to make you feel stupid although there's no logical reason for feeling this way.

It seems the number of messages left on your machine is directly related to how bizarre, humorous or witty the message is which the machine spits out.

If that's the case, maybe I'll go out and buy one of those tapes impersonators make. That way maybe I won't have to listen to as many dial tones as I am now.



Egg throwing is not a joke

Open letter to the editor

This letter is directed to the group of boys who pelted two young lads on my doorstep with eggs on Halloween night, splattering both the boys and my house wall and front door.

Last year the vehicle parked in our yard was splattered in the same manner.

The group of boys who pelted my house (and two boys on my

doorstep) with eggs on Halloween night, which necessitated a scrubbing of both the boys and the front door, porch and front wall of my house are advised that any further incidents of this nature will result in immediate legal action against those responsible.

Your conduct on a public street is a matter of disgrace, and when your conduct involves my guests and my property it becomes a matter which,

I assure you will not be treated as an inconsequential joke, and is not.

Yours Truly,
Dorothy L. Ginn

(Editors note: The seemingly innocent act of throwing an egg at someone could lead to charges of assault and/or mischief. Should a person be injured by the egg, a charge of aggravated assault could be laid.)

I've had my fill of delivery rooms

I have before me a report in the Canadian Journal of Anaesthesia suggesting that fathers should think twice before venturing into the delivery room to get "personally involved" in the birth of their children.

I have several responses to a proposal such as that -- two of which are: "No kidding," and "NOW they tell me."

Where were these experts when I needed them -- in the delivery room of St. Joseph's Hospital when my daughter was being born? This, of course was several years ago. Back in the Age of Mariposa and Woodstock -- a Caring Sharing Involved and Happening Era when friends in bandannas and denim would say "Naturally you'll be attending the birth with your wife." "Yup" you would reply. "Oh sure, you bet. Wouldn't have it any other way."

But of COURSE you would share the sacred birth process. Wasn't that what Life Was All About?

Well, yes. Yes it is. But

Friends....

It's messy.

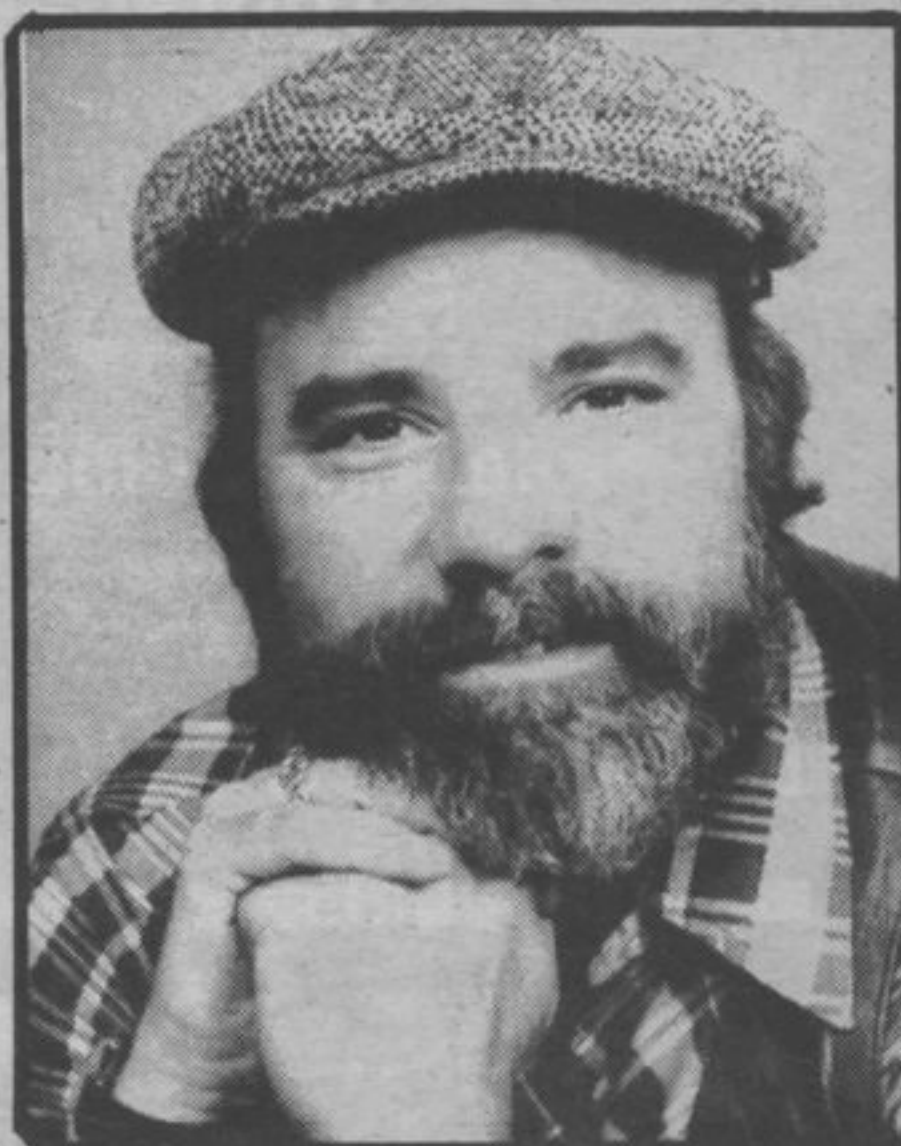
It's more than messy -- it's mortifying.

Thoreau once said: "Beware of any enterprise that requires new clothes." Black's Corollary reads: "Be extra leery of any enterprise that requires paper slippers and a surgical mask. That's what they dress maternity room Dad voyeurs in -- paper slippers and a surgical mask. Then they ask you if you'd mind if a class of student nurses watches the birth.

Now think about this: You are in a room with your wife who is naked and in some considerable distress. The two of you are poised uneasily on the cusp of one of the biggest days of your life. The authorities want to know if you'd mind if a herd of strangers takes notes. If it happened in your living room, at your office, on the street -- anywhere that was even close to your own turf, you would tell the authorities to go point Sifto, but you are in a strange

room full of sundry stainless steel mysteries not to mention tubes and dials and you are wearing paper slippers and a surgical mask. Cowlike, you nod your assent.

Cheer up -- this is only the first assault on your dignity.



Arthur Black

Soon the doctor comes. You can tell he's the doctor because the maternity room staff defer to him. Besides, he's got the rubber gloves on and his surgical mask is regular issue cloth, not cheap paper like yours.

It's good that you have these clues to the doctor's identity because you'd never figure out who he was from his conversation. He talks like your garage mechanic. He chats about the weather and The Blue Jays and his golf game. He offers his analysis of the current stock market slump. He crows about the gas mileage he gets with his BMW.

And as he talks, this doctor -- this stranger! -- is doing unspeakable things with his hands to your soulmate. But casually! Offhandedly, as it were, like a butcher rearranging the cold cuts in his display cooler.

This is an outrage! A flagrant flouting of everything you hold dear! Are you just gonna stand there like a shnook and allow this to go on? Aren't you going to roar like a bull, rage like a tiger and put these interlopers in their place with your icy, rapier wit?

Wearing paper slippers and a surgical mask? Get serious.

In any case, it will soon get worse. The birthing process is moving along briskly. Your wife is howling and panting and perspiring, pausing only briefly to denounce you, at the top of her lungs, as the source of all pain and evil in the world. You ask her to remember the breathing exercises. She asks you to perform something that is both dexterously demanding and impossible to repeat in a family newspaper.

And now the doctor is brandishing a what is that thing anyway? A fencing sword? A jackhammer? A jousting lance? No. It is a needle. And he is going to give it to your wife OH MY GOD!! That's all I remember. They tell me I hit my head quite a clip on the stirrup on my way to the floor.

Did I mention that we had a beautiful baby girl? My wife told me all about it in the recovery room.

Mine, not hers.