

Editorial

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What happened to democracy?

Being a former resident of Manitoba, I commend Premier Gary Filmon, Liberal leader Sharon Carstairs, and NDP leader Gary Doer for having the guts to speak up against the Meech Lake Constitutional accord.

Why should we let Quebec walk all over the rest of the country? They want all these extra privileges while the other nine provinces suffer.

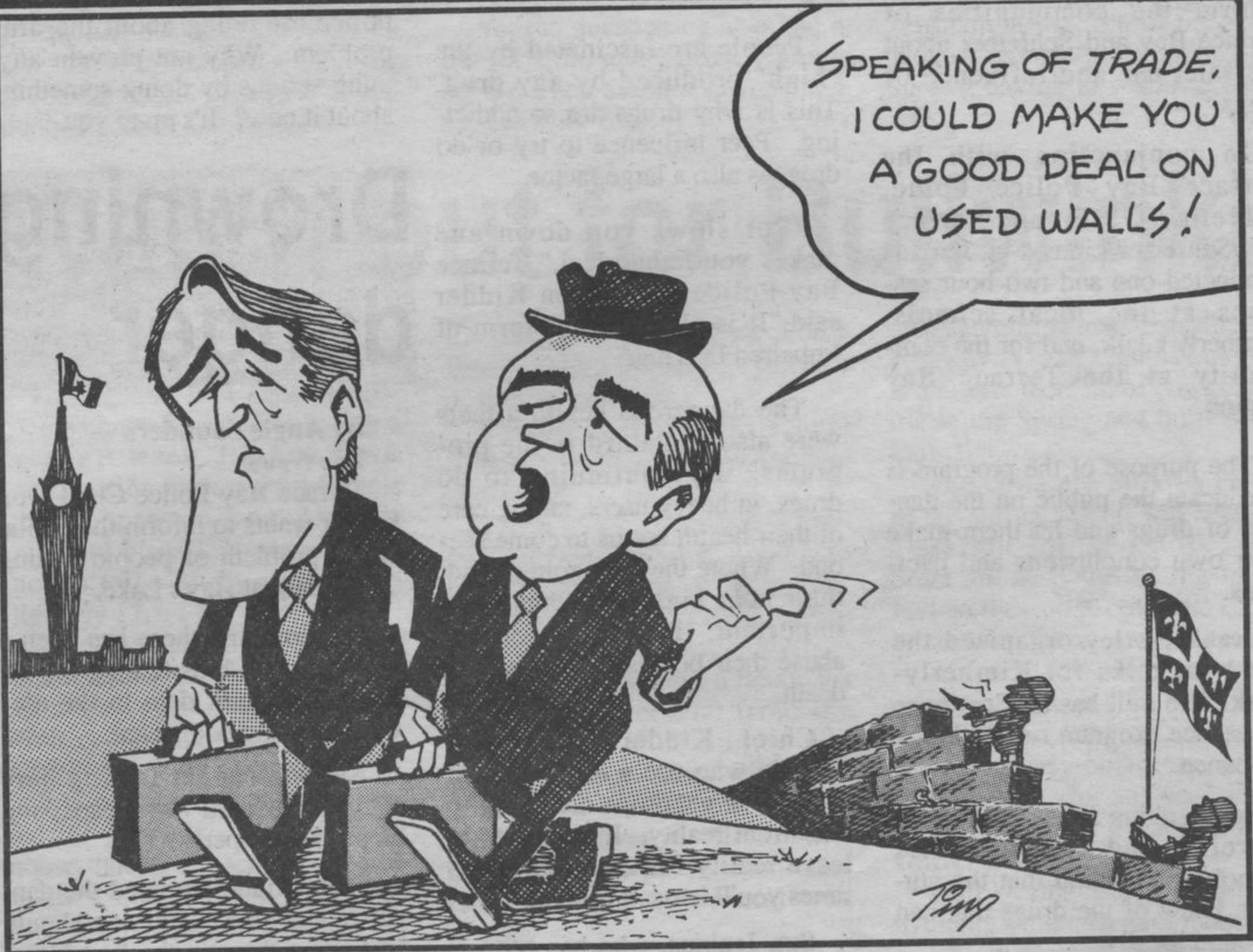
If the accord is passed Quebec will have the designation as a "distinct society". Quebec will get a constitutional guarantee that it will receive a stated share of immigrants entering Canada. The constitution would also recognize, as a fundamental characteristic of Canada, the existence of a French-speaking community based in Quebec but also existing in other provinces.

The accord fiasco is damaging the economy. Other countries that invest in Canada are considering dumping bond holdings due to the present situation. Finance Minister Michael Wilson admitted the Meech Lake fiasco was damaging investor confidence in the country. Doubts created by the debate have also pushed interest rates higher.

It seems inevitable that Quebec will break away and from the rest of Canada if Meech Lake is not resolved by June 23rd.

Where will Canada be without Quebec? Besides splitting the country, it will probably cost the country a lot economically. I would hate to see this country split up, but if there's no will on Quebec's part to keep the country together, then we can't.

Angie Saunders



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,
I must admit that I was disappointed in the papers coverage of the recent high school production of "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown".
It would have been nice to watch its progress in rehearsals, know more about the play, its participants on stage and off, have photos of this wonderful production - to spark interest in

everyone throughout the area. I know that many missed a great evening's performance.
What a great experience that has been given to not only the students involved but to we, in the audience. We need more arts in our area and I feel it should be encouraged with great enthusiasm.
My congratulations to all those involved because all the hard

work brought us a tremendous amount of pleasure.
Positively,
Judi Sundland

Editor's note, ~~from the news room~~
I heard from a great many people, the success of the production "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown" and I congratulate every-
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Canada's favorite blood sport

Isn't it funny how accidents often seem to happen in slow motion? This one unfolded in front of me like a Hockey Night in Canada instant replay -- except that the main actor wasn't a defenceman or a forward, it was a 1982 Chevy.

I'd been following its taillights through the suburbs of Toronto for a few minutes -- nothing sinister, we both just happened to be going in the same direction -- when suddenly the Chevy gently ambled over to the shoulder, off the road and up an embankment. The car ran a kind of lazy buttonhook pattern, nosing to the top of the embankment then turning and coming back towards the road. It came to rest facing backwards, in the direction it had come from.

The whole incident took just a few seconds and was so unviolent, so bucolic-looking that I almost drove right by as if something perfectly natural had occurred.

But no. There was the slew of tire tracks through the snow and the remains of a fledgling

spruce dangling from the front bumper and the moon faces of passenger staring out the car windshield. No, this was an accident alright. I stopped, ran to the car, yanked open the driver's door...

And all but passed out. The car reeked of booze. The driver was glassy-eyed and oblivious. A lout in the back seat had a half-dead case of 24 between his feet. He looked up at me rheumy-eyed, slurring, "Hey man, help us hide the beer inna trunk before the cops come, mannnnn!"

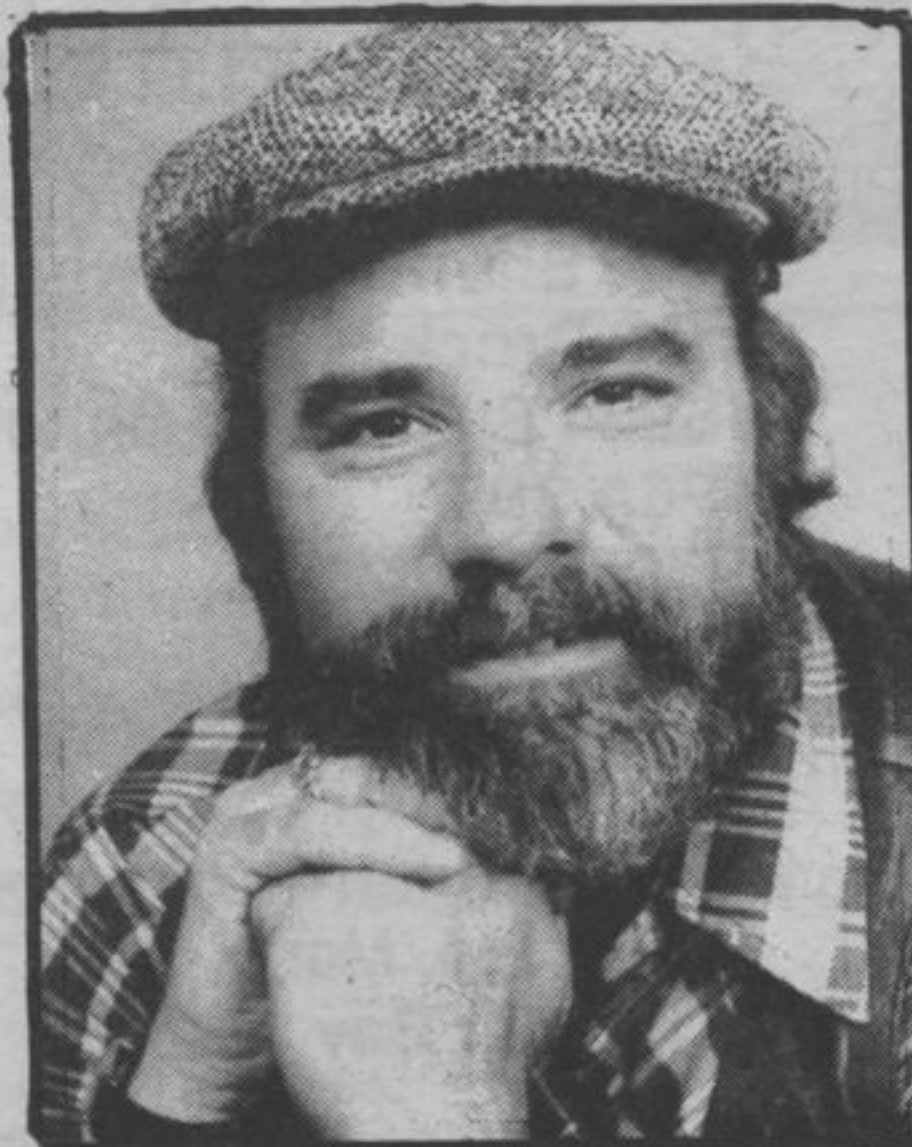
Drinking and driving. It's practically a sport in Canada. And a blood sport at that.

The experts estimate that over 50 per cent of the traffic accidents that occur on Canadian streets and highways every year involve booze in one way or another. Which puts us right up there proportionally with the USA.

The War in Vietnam claimed 58,000 American lives. Booze-related traffic accidents knock off that many Americans every year.

As I say, we have no reason

to feel holier than thou up here in Canada. We still treat drinking and driving as an Aw-shucks-boys-will-be-boys kind of offense. Policemen tend to err on the side of generosity, if not look the other way. Judges, as often as not, let drunk drivers



Arthur Black

off with a slap on the wrist and a caution.

Except in Prince Edward Island. They don't fool around with drunk drivers in Canada's tiniest province.

In the past four years, almost

3,500 drivers in Prince Edward Island have been convicted of driving while impaired, and you know what?

Every one of them went to jail.

They didn't get lectures or gory films or a few hundred hours of community work or suspended licences. They did time. Behind bars. They were fingerprinted and photographed and strip-searched just like rapists and bank robbers and murderers.

They got themselves a record.

And some of these drunk drivers were very important people. Some were tourists. Others were first offenders. Still others were, "...well, judge, I was out with the boys and maybe I had one too many but there was no harm done..."

Eight hundred dollars fine and four days in jail was the usual PEI punishment for the first offence -- and God have mercy on anyone nailed a second time.

Any mercy would have to be God's.

It wouldn't come from the

provincial court judges. There are only three of them on the island and they all feel the same about bozos who booze and get behind the wheel. "Everyone is treated the same," says Nancy Orr, a PEI lawyer. "-- young, old, pregnant women, the rich, tourists -- it's real simple. If you're guilty, you're going to jail."

Does it work? Impaired driving charges have dropped by 31 per cent in PEI since they started throwing drunk drivers in the slammer.

I didn't know about the crackdown in PEI when the Chevy went off the road in front of me, but I knew I was sick of reading about the blood spilled and misery caused by Canada's most common crime.

"C'mon, mannnn!" The kid in the back seat was trying to get out of the car, the beer case in his lap. "Help us hide the beer inna trunk!"

I pushed him back in the car, not gently, the beer bottles clanking and skittering all over the floor.

"Go to hell," I said. And we waited for the cops.