

Bank robbing for beginners

I'm sure there are successful and competent bank robbers in this world just as there are honest and hard-working politicians just as there are light and leotarded men who fly around your bed at night replacing extracted molars under the pillow with crisp new one dollar bills.

It just seems, if you read those bold-type little brights on the front page of newspapers that bank robbers are dumber than driftwood with the luck of an English sign painter who owns a chain of shops in Quebec.

I'm a sucker for a good robbery story gone awry.

Years ago, two men lurking in the lobby of a Holiday Inn in Buffalo, New York were given employment applications by the night manager when they said

William J. Thomas

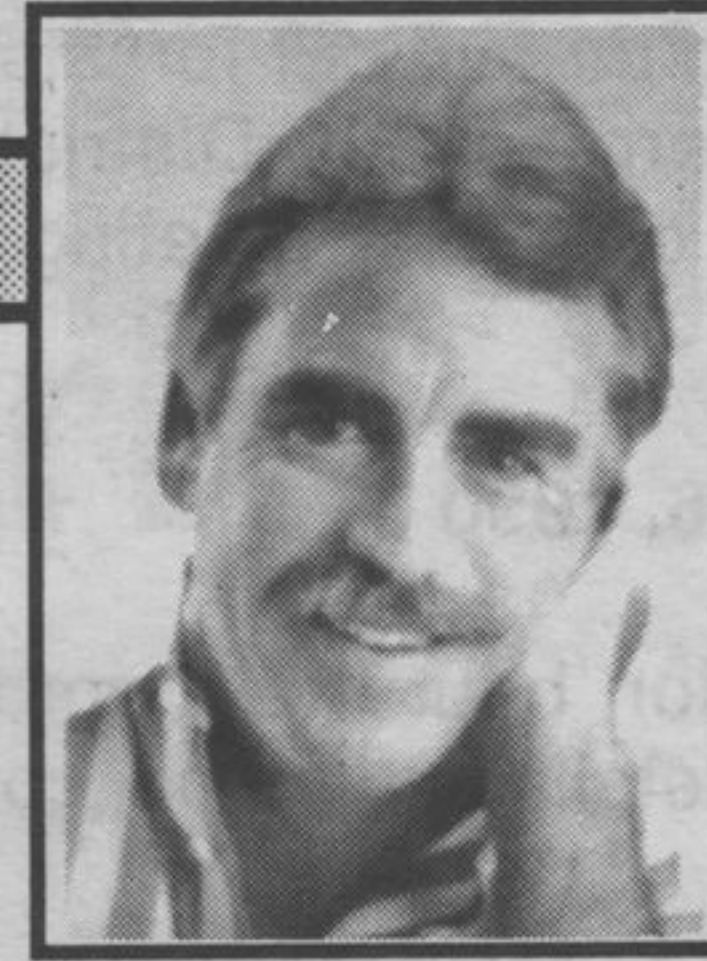
All The World's A Circus

they were looking for work. After they'd left with the contents of the safe, the police discovered one of them had filled out the employment application CORRECTLY.

Not only was it the easiest bust of the week for the Buffalo police, authorities were able to immediately place the applicant in the prison work program with not so much as a preliminary interview.

There are all sorts of versions of bank robbers who have written their hold-up note on the back of their personalized cheques and one crook in St. Louis who might

as well have. This guy passed his hold-up note to the teller demanding money and declaring he was armed. To this the teller said: "ARE NOT" to which the robber said "AM TOO!" to which the teller repeated: "ARE NOT" to which the robber drew a handgun out of his belt and in so doing shot off the index finger of his other hand. The police retrieved the finger, had it printed and were waiting for the guy in his driveway when he returned from the neighborhood medical clinic where he'd claimed a pit bull had attacked him which is not so far fetched since Missouri is one of



eight states in which dogs can legally carry firearms provided they are not concealed somewhere on their person.

A few weeks ago in California police broke up a bank robbery in progress and pummelled the suspect immobile as he turned to leave the wicket with a wad of

stolen cash. As the would-be robber hit the floor, so did a telescopic white cane that had been hidden in his jacket. The bank robber was blind. Later, he said he was grateful to the person who ushered him into the bank and up to the wicket but he knew his slim chance of success still depended on a good samaritan assisting him in the getaway.

If nothing else, the story of the blind bank robber shows incredible initiative and dogged determination. Perhaps his choice of career was somewhat ill-conceived but damn it- you never know your capabilities unless you try. Now this guy can move onto other endeavors secure in the knowledge that whatever job the

continued on page 6

Vote not worth very much

Do you get the sneaky feeling every now and again that you're not getting your vote's worth of input into our so-called democratic form of government?

At the rate which any of the Three Pooper Parties chooses to ignore our yellings and shoutings out here in the market place, I'd say our vote is worth about as much as the paper on which our constitution is written. Damn all!

An ex-lady-MP was to be heard recently bleating on the radio, "Everybody out there is so angry these days. I don't know what they're so mad about." Lady, where have you been, and what kind of Cuckoo Land have you been living in lately?

Of course we're mad out here. Darned good and mad. We're mad about the whole Meech Lake sell-out. We're mad about paying for a French-language service and printing duality which most of us

Olga Landiak

Life, According to Baba

either don't want or have little need for. And we're mad about being relegated to a second-class citizenship by a government insisting on giving ONE PROVINCE (guess which one) and its citizens special status above all others.

We're still mad about the darned Metrification System which was shoved on us willy-nilly and is still a blasted headache, and we're still mad about being completely left out of the decision-making when it came to the Capital Punishment deal. Eighty per cent of us polled WANTED it reinstated, but the government did the dirty on us and allowed the MP's to vote outside the party line and according to their own consciences. Yeah,

THEIR own. Not ours who are supposed to be represented by them, but theirs. So where did that leave us? Out on our non-voting keesters, that's where.

Something must surely happen to these duly-elected MP's and MPP's when they go traipsing off to Ought-Wawa-on-the-Reed-O, or Tarrana the Great and Greedy, 'cause they seem to end up representing the party and the government to us, instead of the other way around. These are our so-called SERVANTS? What a bag of baloney! Seems like we can't depend on our representatives any more who are so scared of the party line that they become willing Judases of we, the people.

Do we have to forever and a

day go out placarding and picketing to get some attention from these "servants" who are now so arrogant they can claim the RCMP has no right to investigate them and their mean, little affairs? Or that we, the common people, should not be allowed to approach their sacred persons no closer than a restrictive boundary line up on the Hill? Thank God, by this time, they have come to their collective senses and with-



drawn this stupid piece of legislation.

Mad? You're darned tooting we're mad. Especially when you throw into the boiling pot of horrendous facts that our so-called "aboriginal" natives do not pay sales tax like the rest of us, and don't even pay income tax if they live and work on their reservations. How come, hey? Maybe we should ALL live in "ethnic reserves" and claim "aboriginal" rights also.

Enough is enough. If the Europeans can provide us with an excellent example of what People Power can do, then maybe that's the only recourse left to us today since our over-vaunted VOTE isn't worth a spit anymore.

Let's mount the barricades and keep up the shouting, and hollering, and agitating. Maybe one of these days we'll get a party which will REALLY represent us and our collective wishes.

New system for Sandy Lake

July 1, 1990. It's Canada Day. My radio and newspapers are telling me it's a Canada Day unlike any other. The Meech Lake Accord is dead. Quebec's Liberals and the PQ have agreed to a non-partisan study of the province's future. A new poll says Western Canadians haven't been this angry at Ottawa since Pierre Trudeau shrugged and quipped "why should I sell your wheat?" In Ottawa, Parliament Hill is welcoming Queen Elizabeth - sort of. Native leaders and some municipal politicians from across the river in Hull are boycotting the royal visit, and Canada Day. Quebec says it's been rejected. The native leaders are upset they were never included in the Meech madness, and are about to be punished for Elijah Harper's courage in the Manitoba legislature.

All this leaves me with a feeling that this country has to find a new way of writing a constitution. No wonder we get discord, the way we do it now. We lock eleven men in a conference room, then feed them and the rest of us nothing but a steady diet of media hype and drafts of vague legal documents. Anyone outside the



NORTHERN INSIGHTS

by Larry Sanders



locked room is instantly alienated. The eleven men are made to feel like Cardinals picking a Pope, instead of earthly representatives.

Instead, I believe we need real experiences in constitutional framing. Not conferences. Even good conferences produce little beyond good intentions. The rest leave nothing behind but big hotel bills. No, we don't need to get together and TALK. Rather, I suggest we go ahead and actually experiment with new ways of doing things - ways that include people rather than exclude them - ways that build bridges, rather than tearing them down. Then, based on these real-life experiments, we'll have much better models to work from, and write up in constitutional form.

In the week leading up to this Canada Day, I was privileged to

be in Sandy Lake for the launch of such an experiment. Sandy Lake is not easy to get to. Drive non-stop for six hours from Thunder Bay northwest to Red Lake. Then get in a small plane and fly northwest for an hour, until you're above the 52nd parallel, and almost in Manitoba. When you land in Sandy Lake, you'll step out on to a gravel parking lot, surrounded by a high wire mesh fence. A plywood shed painted white with green trim is the airport waiting room. Hardly seems like a place where constitutional history is being written, but it is.

About a mile across town, in the Sandy Lake school gym I witnessed the swearing in of Canada's first court system with native involvement. Three elders - Abel Rae, Clara Loonfoot and Daniel Meekis - were officially

recognized by an Ontario Justice of the Peace, Charlie Fisher, and Attorney-General Ian Scott, as officers of the court. They will sit beside the judge on nearly all cases. They will not get involved in deciding guilt or innocence. But once there is a finding of guilt, they advise the judge on sentencing. More serious crimes, such as rape or murder, or any offense requiring a jury trial, will not be handled by the aboriginal court.

This court will not operate like the ones we're used to in the rest of Ontario. Everyone involved sits around a square or round configuration of tables as equal participants. No one is on an elevated bench, or set off behind a guard rail. Ted Burton, the director of Crown Attorneys for northwestern Ontario, says the physical arrangements exemplify the

application of aboriginal philosophy to the court system. "It will not be adversarial. What we're used to in our society is a crown attorney on one side and the defence council on the other. In the Indian society, this adversarial concept doesn't exist and basically everyone sits in a circle, and has an equal say in matters. Anyone can join that circle who feels that they have something to contribute."

At the swearing-in, Attorney-General Ian Scott praised the Sandy Lake band for "not waiting for constitutional conferences, not waiting for all provinces to agree. Sandy Lake found ways to begin making things better now, and my government acted upon them." Scott told me in an interview, "We've had the failure of Meech Lake, and I think it's becoming evident that there won't be any constitutional talks on any subject - Senate reform, or aboriginal interests - for a significant period of time. We've always thought that those aboriginal constitutional talks will be easier, and therefore more likely to succeed, if we get real experience, both on the

continued on page 6