

The Terrace Bay - Schreiber News is published every Tuesday by Laurentian Publishing Limited, Box 579, 13 Simcoe Plaza, Terrace Bay, Ont., P0T 2W0 Tel.: 807-825-3747. Second class mailing permit 2264. Member of the Ontario Community Newspaper Association and the Canadian Community Newspaper Association

Single copies 40 cents. Subscription rates: \$16 per year / seniors \$10 (local); \$27 per year (out of 40 mile radius) \$36 in U.S.

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Dust bowl days are dead ahead

We should be thinking about and helping those less fortunate than ourselves all year round. Many people do.

Many of us leave it to the various agencies and programs we support through our taxes.

Under most circumstances that is fine. After all, that is one reason we pay taxes. The situation, however, is changing.

The Thunder Bay District Municipal League was told at its recent quarterly meeting that municipalities are going to have to bear more of the financial responsibilities for social services.

The cost of social services is currently shared between the federal government, the provincial government and the municipalities. The Canada Assistance Plan is the program that determines how the federal government and the provincial governments will split their share.

In the past increases to that program were not capped. Ottawa would cover half of whatever funds the provinces distributed.

Now, increases to federal contributions to the Canadian Assistance Plan are limited to five per cent. It follows then that there will be less money for the provinces and the municipalities will have to carry the burden.

Unfortunately, this extra financial load has been handed to the municipalities just as the current recession places increased pressure on social services.

Unemployment is at 8.8 per cent, a three year high, and it is now more difficult than ever to qualify for unemployment insurance because of recent changes by the federal government to the Unemployment Insurance Act.

The numbers of Canadians using non-governmental agencies such as food banks is increasing rapidly. Something that has been known for a long time.

As the new year approaches there is one more item that will make life difficult for the increasing numbers of people with fixed incomes.

The proposed seven per cent goods and services tax.

This tax is bound to fuel the inflation the Bank of Canada has been fighting with a high interest rate policy. A policy many believe has been a major contributor to the recession.

Let's hope the dog catches its tail soon and stops running around in circles. The municipalities, the cities, towns, villages and townships cannot carry an increased financial responsibility for social services. Remember, municipalities are allowed only one form of tax - your property tax.

We can survive the dust bowl days that lay ahead. Set aside, for the moment, the politics, the pointing of fingers and the laying of blame.

Instead, look around you and see what you have. Look around you and see what others, especially children, don't have.

Don't get bogged down in what others aren't doing. Think about what you can do. Give from the heart. Give what you can, when you can and where you can.

Tomorrow is a new year.

Robert Cotton

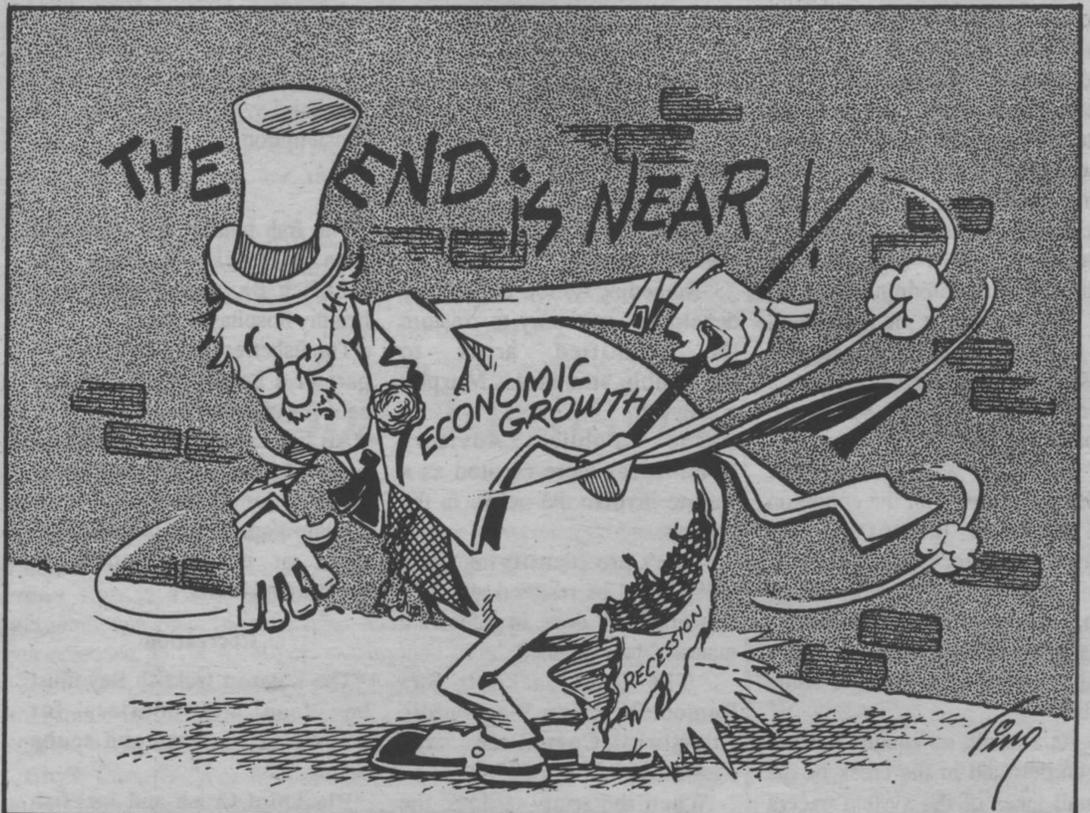
Lots of help for Share the Wealth campaign

Share the Wealth is receiving plenty of help in collecting food and toys for this year's Christmas hampers.

Students at Holy Angels School, Schreiber Public School, Terrace Bay Public School, St. Martin School and Ecole St. Martin are busy bringing in donations to help others have a wonderful Christmas.

Lake Superior High School students are using a little friendly rivalry to encourage donations. The Schreiber campus has collected 239 points, one point for each article and one for each dollar, and the Terrace Bay campus has 198 points.

Congratulations are due to all the students for being leaders in this community effort.



Jetcar...thanks but no thanks

In our worship of the machine, we have settled for something less than a full life, something that is hardly even a tenth of life, or a hundredth of a life. We have confused progress with mechanization.

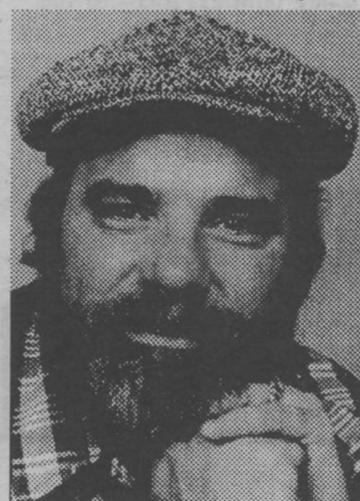
Lewis Mumford

Do you remember the machines they promised us? You'd have to be a certain age to recall them -- say, 40 or over. I used to read all about them in *Popular Mechanics*. That magazine had a near-fetish about the "automobiles of the future". Time and again the editors would devote full cover stories to rhapsodic predictions of just how wonderful transportation was soon going to be. Graphic artists were commissioned to sketch Star Trekish metropolises bristling with futuristic hives and domes, all interlaced with translucent walkways and moving sidewalks. Whizzing through the air in all directions you could see the "automobiles" of the future -- compact saucers really, about the size of a mid-size American car, but capable of travelling overland or through the air. Each of the cars had a plastic bubble of a cockpit, and in that cockpit you could usually see a grinning, middle-class nuclear family of the future, out for a care-free week-end spin.

I used to moon over those articles in *Popular Mechanics* back in the late '50's. They always assured us this fantastic world was just around the corner. We'd all be flitting about in jetcars well before the turn of the century -- by 1980 at

the very latest.

Well, it's 1990, and I often think of those decade-overdue Jetcars as my hopelessly old-fashioned, terminally pavement-bound Toyota noses into the morning rush hour traffic going to the city. I've usually got plenty of time to think, because there's no rush at all in my rush



Arthur Black

hour. I'm fused into a miles-long traffic jam that's going nowhere.

Still, it's a chance to work out some great finger-drum solos on the steering wheel while I listen to the car radio. During the really bad traffic jams I even get to read a bit of the morning paper.

Which is where I came across the story about Paul Moller and his M200X.

That's the rather un-catchy name Paul's bestowed on his invention. There's a photograph of him in the M200X that accompanies the newspaper story.

I would have named his invention differently.

I would have called it The Jetcar.

Because that's what it is, alright. Ten years late and not quite as swanky as the *Popular Mechanics* artists conception, but it's a jetcar, and Paul Moller, a professor of aeronautics, is in the cockpit, hovering about ten feet off the ground while newspaper reporters take pictures.

The M200X is only the beginning, says Moller. His California company is already working on a model that will carry four passengers at 500 miles per hour as high as 30,000 feet and as far as 800 miles on a single tank of gas.

Just as *Popular Mechanics* predicted back in the '50's!

So how come I'm not excited?

Perhaps it's the price tag -- Moller says a copy of his M200X will cost about the same as a helicopter -- and that's a lot for a craft that so far has only managed to hover about 30 feet off the ground for less than three minutes.

Or maybe it's the realization that Jetcars will only make driving worse, not better.

It's bad enough being stuck to the pavement, worrying about tanker trucks coming up your tailpipe and muscle cars passing you on a hill. Can you imagine being out for a romantic drive with your Sweet Patootie when suddenly the blood drains from her face, her eyes bulge like Westinghouse 60-watters and she shrieks: "YUPPIE ON HIS CARPHONE AT TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH!"

You go ahead Mr. Moller. I'll sit this one out.