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## Community newspapers fight for postal equality

Changes to Canada Post rates for newspapers and other publications have resulted in a clear case of discrimination against community newspapers and their readers.

The facts are clear. While community newspapers face postage cost increases of from 100 to 1000 per cent with only 90 days notice, paid subscription magazines have had their mailing rates increased by 5.5 per cent, free magazines by 50 per cent and daily newspapers by 25 per cent per year for three years.

For example, Rate Code 1 Canadian daily newspapers mailing more than 5 per cent of their circulation will pay 14.9 cents for a 150-gram issue; and their rates will increase 25 per cent per year for the next three years. Rate Code 2 community newspapers may deliver free of charge the first 2,500 copies within a "free zone" 65 km radius of their community. Charges for other copies of the same 150 gram weight will jump to 41 cents this year.

Canadian-owned magazines such as Maclean's will pay 6.4 cents for each 200 gram magazine mailed. These Rate Code 3 increases were limited to the rate of inflation as directed by the office of the Minister of Communication. Non-paid Canadian magazines were hit with a 50 per cent increase effective March 1, raising their Rate Code 4 charges to 38.4 cents per copy for a 200 gram issue. Community newspapers of the same weight will be charged 51 cents.

(Community newspapers which used to qualify as Rate Code 3 or 4 publications are now placed in a commercial rate option, which has the same rates as Rate Code 2)

The Canadian Community Newspapers Association, of which this newspaper is a member, made numerous presentations to officials at Canada Post, the federal Department of Communications, and Members of Parliament and Cabinet after learning of the proposed increases in early December.

Despite pledges from Communications Minister Marcel Masse that there would be consultations prior to the increase, community newspapers were given only 90 days notice of the impending changes, which are a reflection of decreased subsidies from the Department of Communications (DOC) to Canada Post.

The representations resulted in a decision by Cabinet to delay the increase for Rate Code 2 publications an additional 90 days. Increases for former Rate Code 3 or 4 publications remained effective March 1.

Such blatant discrimination against community newspapers and their readers cannot be ignored. These newspapers have long been the voice of rural and small town Canada, offering a service that is different from their big city cousins but of no less value to their readers. That value is apparently not appreciated by the government, the Department of Communications, or Canada Post.

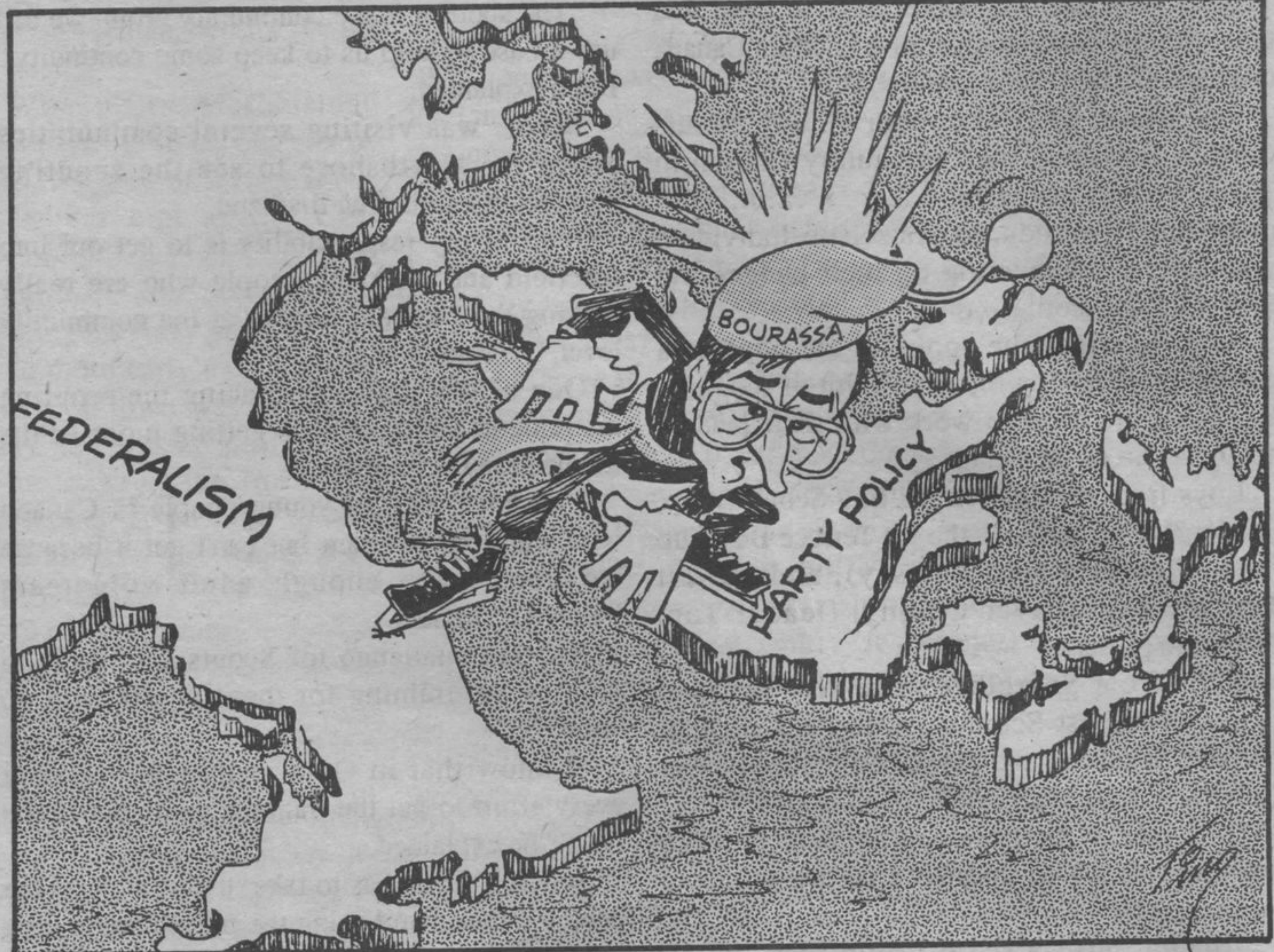
Community newspaper publishers understand the reason for the decreased DOC subsidies and support the government's fight against the federal deficit. But they wonder why they have been singled out for increases of up to 1000 per cent in 90 days while daily newspapers will be given three years to absorb a 75 year cent increase, and increases for paid magazines are kept to the rate of inflation.

These huge increases could well result in the death of many smaller community newspapers. The readers of these small papers and the communities they serve can ill afford to lose that valuable link to their municipal governments and their neighbors.

Readers should be asking their Members of Parliament about these increases, and why they are less worthy of consideration and service than readers of daily newspapers and magazines.

Community newspapers are not asking for special consideration. They are asking that they be treated as a valued and valuable service to their communities, as a valued and valuable customer of Canada Post, and as equals with other Canadian publications.

Are equality and respect too much to ask?



## High Fashion tumbles

No offense intended to the talented and tasteful typographical Trojans who put this edition together, but reading a good fat newspaper is a little like browsing through a garbage dump. You can wade and sift through the headlines and bylines, photos and supermarket ads, knowing that no matter how dull or irrelevant or repulsive the material gets, you just might turn up a veritable nugget in the next instant.

It happened to me while slogging through a hippo-sized issue of the Toronto Daily Star the other day. One minute my eyes were glazing over from a surfeit of stories about layoffs and shutdowns and downturns, the next minute I was transfixed by a headline that read:

**HAUTE COUTURE IS DYING**

What? High Fashion mortally wounded? The wonderful people at Dior, Blass, Klein, De La Renta, Cassini, Cardin, Lauren, Gucci and Givenchy all now contemplating pink slips? Those New York/Paris/Rome soothsayers of style who gave us the maxi, the midi and the Empire Line -- not to mention models who looked like refugees from a Nazi Death Camp?

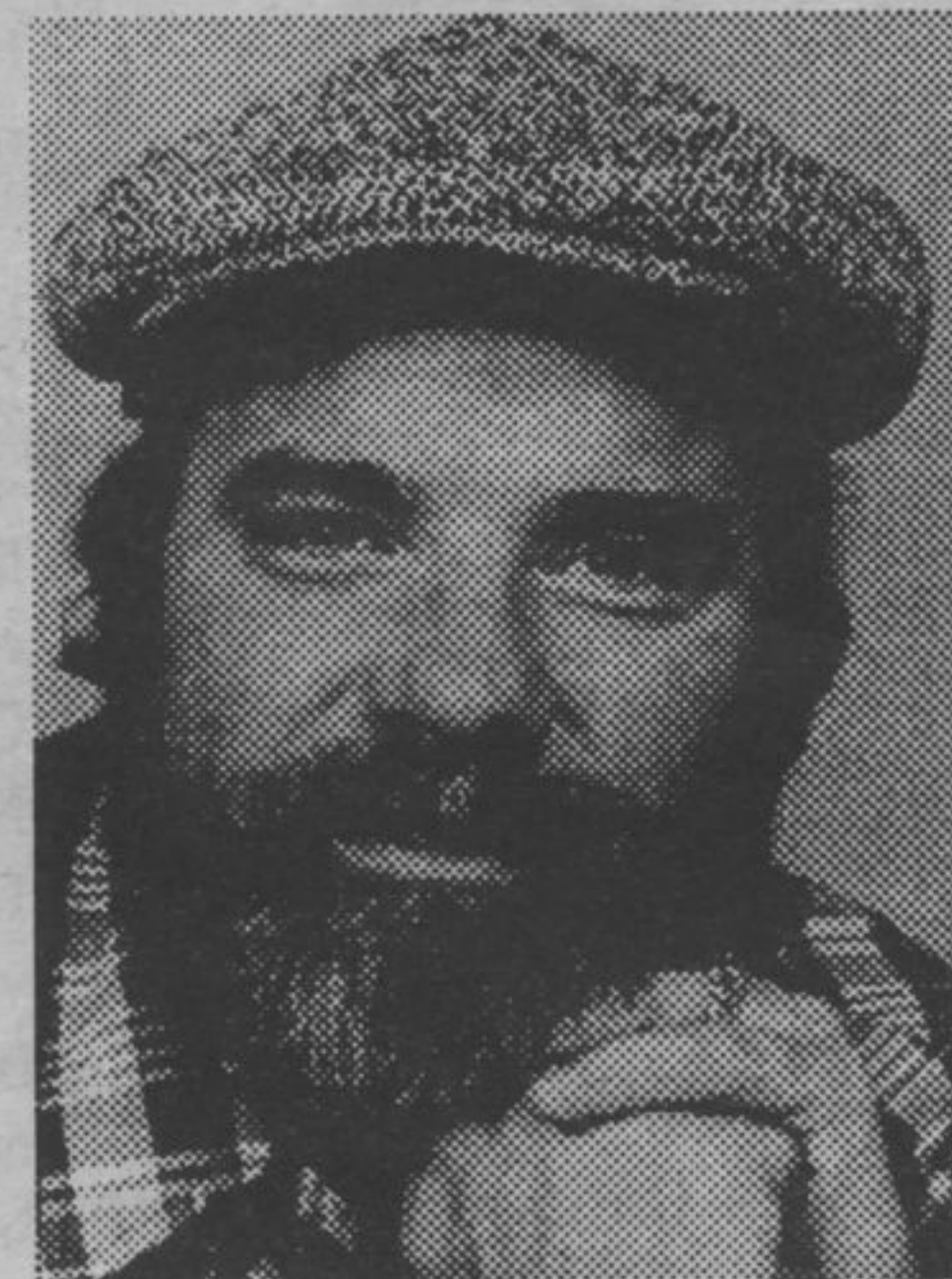
Out of a job?

This is the best news I've heard since Paul Henderson decided to shoot instead of pass.

According to the news story beneath the headline, high fashion's demise is strictly a matter of economics. Nearly half the firms that buy haute couture lines are American and thanks to the recession, they

to. "We started to feel the effects of the general economic situation last May" lamented the general director of a major French couturier, "--people were more hesitant about buying."

It's kind of like *The Emperor's New Clothes* story writ large. I find it difficult to imagine that High Fashion, which



**Arthur Black**

held us all to ransom for years, is suddenly on its deathbed.

More than years -- centuries. Humankind's fascination with bodily adornment can be traced back to 7500 BC when Egyptian shepherds in the Nile Valley discovered that the oil from crushed castor beans would both protect them from the sun and give them a George Hamilton-style tan. Pretty soon Egyptians with pretensions to glamor were slapping henna on their hair and kohl on the bags under their eyes -- not to mention all manner of oils, pastes, powders and unguents. Half a century before the stable scene in Bethlehem, Cleopatra was dabbing red ochre on her cheeks and painting her upper eyelids blue-black and

lower lids green.

Could Coco Chanel be far behind?

We've gone through some pretty Dali-esque fashion trends through the ages. The Roman poet Ovid advocated a face pack of raw egg and mashed narcissus bulbs for smooth skin. Nero and his acolytes smeared lead and chalk on their faces. Elizabeth the first plucked out her eyebrows and dyed her hair red. Catherine of Medici decreed that all the ladies of her court must have a 13 inch waist. (The beanpole model Twiggy measured 22 inches around the equator.) In the 19th century women of fashion wore bathing suits made of wool, with a fitted bodice, a high neck, full sleeves, a knee length skirt, under which were bloomers, full-length black stockings and low canvas shoes. When wet, the bathing suits often out weighed the bathers.

And then of course, there's the zoot suit, the topless gown, the sack dress and Madonna.

Clearly fashion has been quite insane for some time.

And now it's dying. "These are the last days of haute couture" mourns Jacques Mouclier, head of the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne. "Women don't need it anymore...people are not in the mood to go out and spend their money on haute couture dresses."

I hope Monsieur Mouclier is right, but I doubt any complex economic virus is to blame. I suspect haute couture is succumbing to the something that killed off the dinosaurs. It's just too stupid to live.