

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 50 cents incl. GST. Subscription rates: \$18 per year / seniors \$12 (local); \$29 per year (out of 40 mile radius) \$38 in U.S. Add GST to yearly subs.

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National communication systems must be restored

The following is letter from Iain Angus, NDP Transport Critic and MP for Thunder Bay - Atikokan, to Prime Minister Mulroney. It speaks to a common theme that emerged from the Spicer Commission - the need for Canadians to be better able to communicate with each other if Canada is to maintain its national identity. In light of the recent cuts at VIA Rail and the CBC, and the closure of rural post offices, the issue of improved communications systems is especially relevant to the people of Terrace Bay, Schreiber and other Northshore communities.

Robert A. Cotton

Dear Prime Minister,

Throughout the report of the Spicer Commission a common theme emerges, that being the need for Canadians to interact with each other from coast to coast to coast.

"Participants strongly and repeatedly told the Forum that their lack of knowledge prevented them from knowing other regions of the country and the people of those regions, and that knowing ourselves is the best way to agree how to solve problems."

"Canadians also told the Forum that they see themselves as people who settle their differences peaceably, through consultation rather than confrontation. Many wanted face-to-face exchanges between Canadians in different parts of the country."

And finally, the Forum recommended that:

"We believe that a creative and innovative approach is needed to lessen the difficulties our geography imposes on Canadians in understanding and appreciating their country. We believe that the federal government should invite the travel industry to work out realistic and affordable plans to allow Canadians to visit other parts of Canada much more cheaply and conveniently."

Mr. Prime Minister, in your Canada Day remarks you stated that it was up to Canadians to keep Canada together. Yet Mr. Spicer laid the blame for the current climate of uncertainty at your door step.

Given the record of your government in cutting off that access between Canadians, cuts to CBC, closing of rural post offices and the savage dismantling of our national rail passenger service, it is no wonder that Mr. Spicer chose to point the finger of blame at you . . . and I agree!

You, sir, have an option!

You can continue to pursue your belief that the market place is better positioned to make decisions affecting this country or you can listen to the words of the Commissioners when they state:

"As a result, many participants feel betrayed and bereft, and are confused and angry. Part of this is due to their sense that traditional Canadians values are being usurped by anonymous market forces and that governments are doing nothing to deal with these. History plainly shows that governments have a constructive role to play redressing market imperfections, supplementing market initiatives, and preserving the country. They are the only entity which can house and nourish the widely shared values which give birth to our common purposes and objectives. Putting such actions in the broader world context that now prevails is among the most important challenges facing governments."

The action that Canadians, along with myself seek is a restoration of those services cut. In particular, if Canadians are to travel throughout this country "much more cheaply and conveniently" then you must restore the VIA rail services eliminated or reduced on January 15, 1991 and then invest in Canada's future by modernizing the service. In addition your government must reject the proposed 20% increase in fares put forward by Transport Canada.

Mr. Prime Minister, as always it is up to you to decide on the direction your government is to take. For once, please listen to the people of Canada and do what is needed.

Yours Truly,
 Iain Angus, MP
 Thunder Bay - Atikokan
 NDP Transport Critic



From a joke to a city

If there's one thing Canadians are good at, it's laughing at each other.

There are Newfie Jokes, of course. And Hogtown Jokes.

Calgarians tell jokes about Edmontonians. Oiler fans respond with knee-slappers about the flickering Flames.

Chic Montrealers snicker over Toronto Wannabes, while World-Class Torontonians chortle at Lunchbucket Hamiltonians.

But there's one Canuck joke you don't hear much anymore: the Sudbury Joke. Sudbury jokes used to be a whole subspecies of humour in this country.

What do you call a guy from Sudbury? Rocky.

Sudbury: the town where you find a pretty girl behind every tree.

Sudbury jokes were based on the way that northern Ontario town used to look -- which is to say, ugly. Years of industrial rapine had denuded the landscape around the town, leaving it looking like the arse end of some lifeless space asteroid. The funniest Sudbury joke was no joke at all -- back in the sixties, Apollo astronauts really *did* go to Sudbury to get familiar with the landscape they would soon see on the moon.

I don't know where NASA astronauts train these days -- the New York Bronx, maybe -- but it isn't Sudbury. The city has changed. Urban cosmeticians have been busy these past couple of decades and Sudbury is almost -- well, dammit -- pretty.

Sudbury has a lot to work with -- for starters, it's got seven, count 'em seven, freshwater lakes within the city limits. That's seven fish-bearing, swim-able lakes. Compare that with Toronto which has 13 public beaches -- all of them closed due to pollution each summer.

Mostly what's changed in Sudbury is that it's a heck of a lot greener than it was a couple of decades ago. What used to be stark boulders, gravel and craters is now fuzzed over with a green mantle of grasses, bush and trees.

realized that unless they wanted to go into the Guinness Book of Records as the largest urban slag heap in the world, they were going to have to do something about Sudbury's Noriega-like complexion. So they started hauling in topsoil and throwing seeds around. So far they've spent about \$14 million and reclaimed some 1500 acres of scrubland and hardpan. In the past fifteen years they've planted well over a million trees.

What's particularly ironic is where nearly half of those seedlings began life.

Three-quarters of a mile underground. In a mine-shaft.

Creighton No. 9 shaft, to be precise. The seedlings were germinated last January, coddled under 1,000 watt metal halide lights for the next four months and finally transplanted above ground in the late spring.

Creighton No. 9 shaft makes a great greenhouse. The temperature is a constant 75 degrees. There's plenty of surplus water and electricity from the mining operations.

And very few browsing moose or hungry budworms three-quarters of a mile down a hardrock mine.

There's an even greater irony at work here. The Creighton mine belongs to Inco.

Inco? Aren't they the folks who put up the great filthy smokestack Americans claim is the biggest single source of sulphur dioxide pollution on the continent?

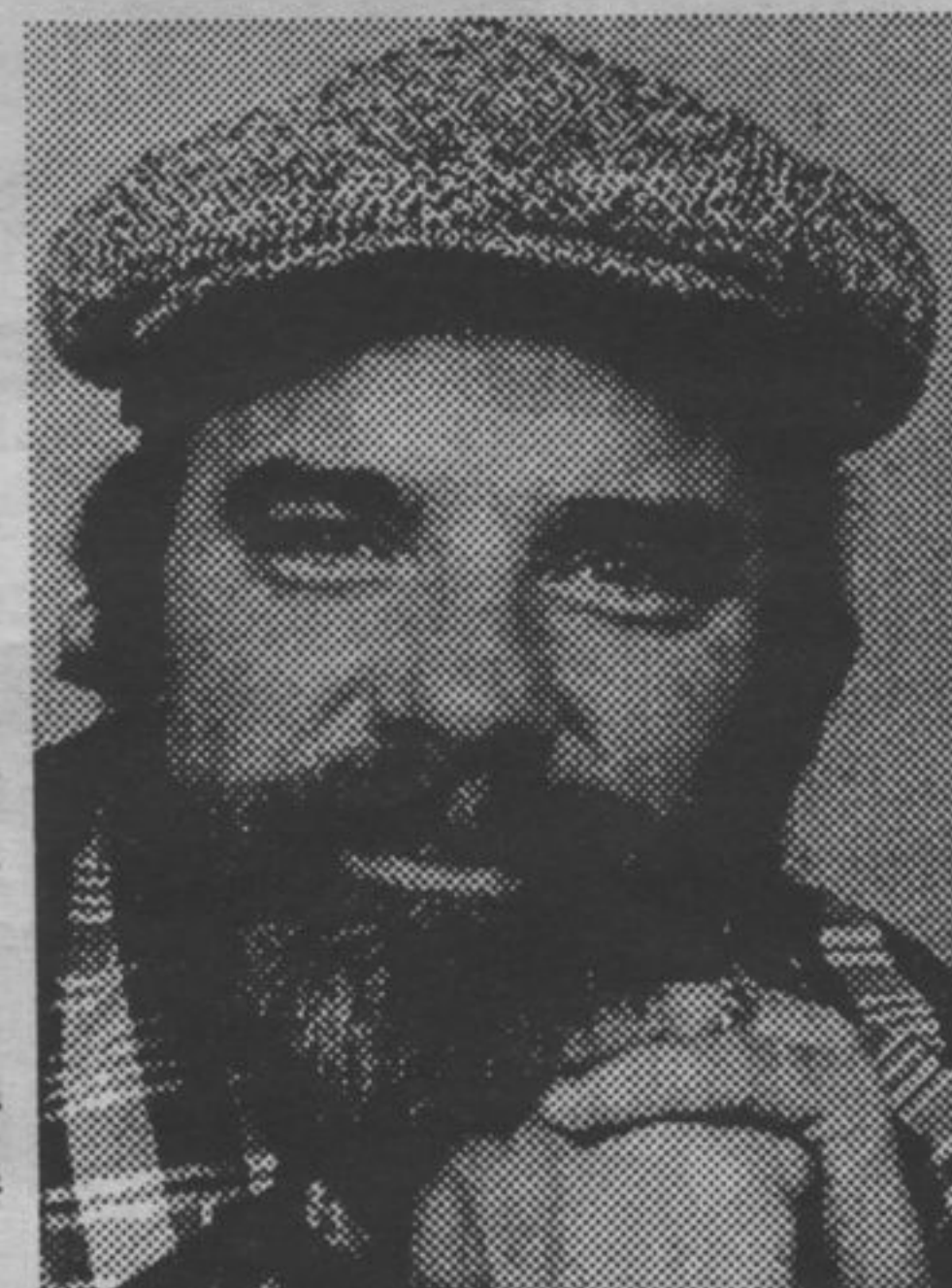
Yup. And Creighton No. 9 is part of a nickel mine that helped to give Sudbury it's Hobs of Hell reputation years ago.

Last year, this mine shaft contributed 55,000 jack and red pine seedlings to the beautification of Sudbury.

Looks like Creighton No. 9 -- and Inco -- are starting to pay their civic dues.

Looks like Sudbury isn't Moon Country anymore.

Looks like the Sudbury Joke is on the rest of us.



Arthur Black