

Editorial

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Stay in School For adventure's sake

Sir Alexander MacKenzie Bi-Centennial Expedition has made good use of the fact that MacKenzie returned to school to improve his navigation skills after he ended up in the wrong place at the end of his first journey of exploration in 1798.

One of the major objectives of the expedition is to encourage students to stay in school. A man of action and adventure such as MacKenzie thought education to be important because without it he could not achieve his goals or continue his adventures. If modern day students can understand this they might change their attitudes about staying in school.

The national dropout rate from secondary schools is 30 per cent - from community college business and technology programs - 70 per cent. Rising educational and skill requirements mean that 64 per cent of all jobs created in this decade will require more than 12 years of education and training compared with 44 per cent in the past.

As many as two-thirds of the parents whose children drop out of school hold negative or indifferent attitudes towards the value of education.

Education is more than just a way of acquiring skills that will get you a job. It can be the thing that turns your life into a real adventure.

MacKenzie is a good role model for this message but the university students bringing the message are even better role models. Each of these 36 young, energetic and personable students has their own personal reason for continuing their education.

For one of the voyageurs school was a struggle when he was younger but Mike Oates persevered and made it to college and university.

"All kids can achieve; just keep trying," he said.

Another of the voyageurs, Cliff Britton, had earned a Forestry diploma after leaving high school and worked for seven years before attending Lakehead University. He's happy he returned to school.

"At first I thought it might be difficult after working for awhile, but I easily made friends and I was more focused about what I wanted in life," he said.

When young people see the adventure these student voyageurs are having and speak to them during the expeditions community stopovers they can't help but catch some of the enthusiasm for education.

"If our adventure awakens curiosity in just one kid who might otherwise drop out, then maybe that student will stay in school to learn and satisfy that curiosity," Richard Cox, Voyageur.

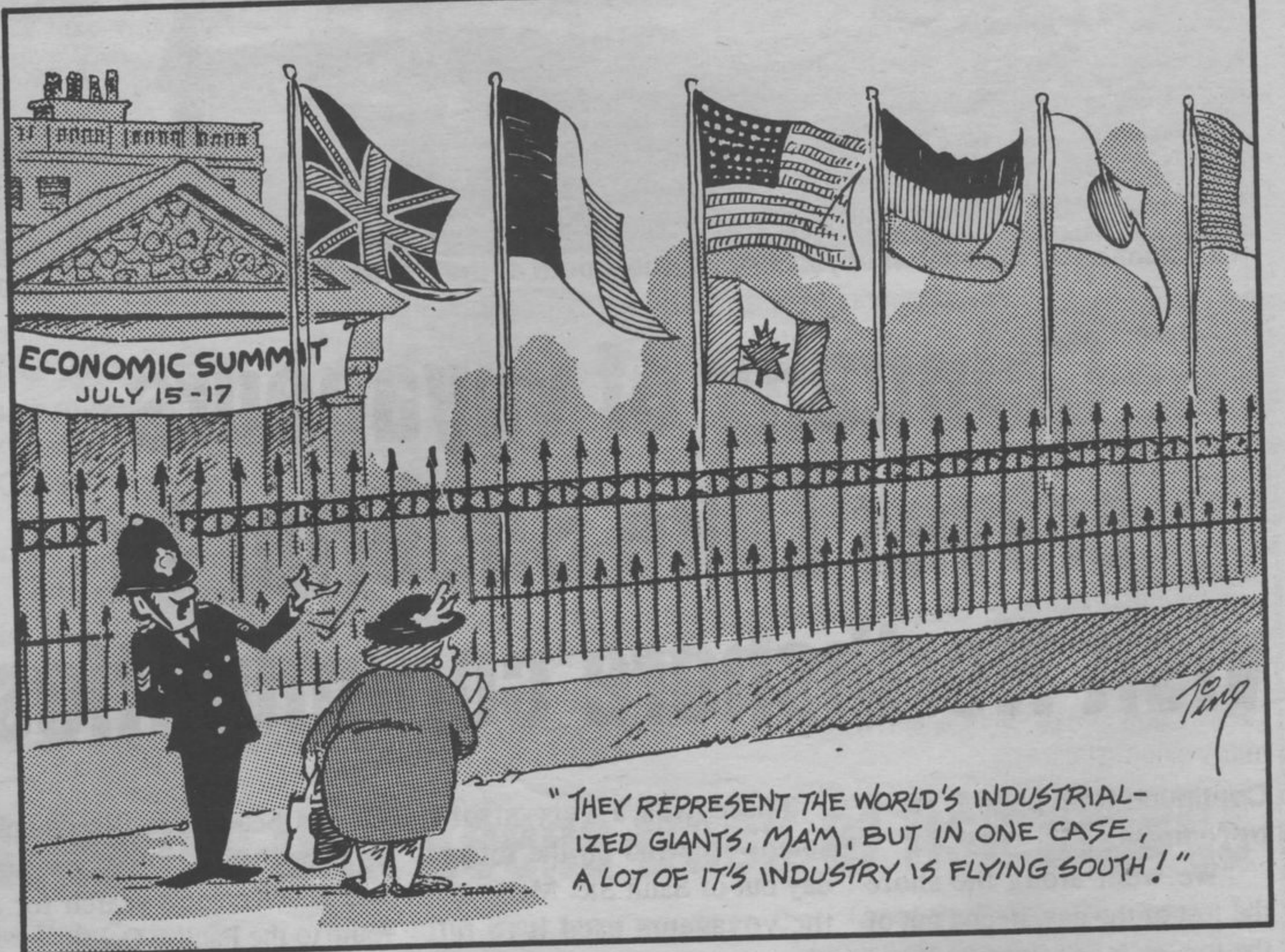
These modern day voyageurs are living, breathing examples of how staying in school can bring fun and adventure into one's life. It does take hard work and determination but adventure never came without a price.

Robert A. Cotton



Looks like an adventure to me

A young and curious spectator at historical show presented by MacKenzie expedition's company of voyageurs



Easy name changes

I see the Americans are renaming a national monument down in Montana. Custer Battlefield is to become The Little Big Horn Battlefield.

Well, fair enough. Custer was outsmarted and outduked in his famous last stand. Naming the place after him is kind of like giving the Stanley Cup to the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The new name doesn't bother me. What's got me worried is how easy it was. We seem to be renaming a lot of things lately. Frobisher Bay becomes Igaluit. Dorchester Boulevard becomes Boulevard Rene Levesque.

Internationally, familiar names are being plastered over with increasing frequency as well. Remember Tanganyika and Zanzibar? Gone. It's Tanzania now. Burma is now Myanmar. In the USSR, Volgograd used to be Stalingrad which used to be Tsaritsyn. And St. Petersburg, which used to be Leningrad...is now St. Petersburg again.

But then, the USSR used to stand for Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In the latest Kremlin flip, "Soviet" has been replaced with "Sovereign".

As they say down at the ballpark, you can't tell the players without a program.

It isn't hard to understand why Russians are eager to get rid of every vestige of repressive thugs like Lenin and Stalin. The Communist Party has appointed a special committee the sole function of which is to rechristen streets carrying the names of no longer fashionable heroes.

Still, I can't help wondering just how far this revisionist fervor will go. Seems like all that has to happen is for some historical figure to fall out of favor and bingo - the name changers stir the paint pots and warm up the printing presses.

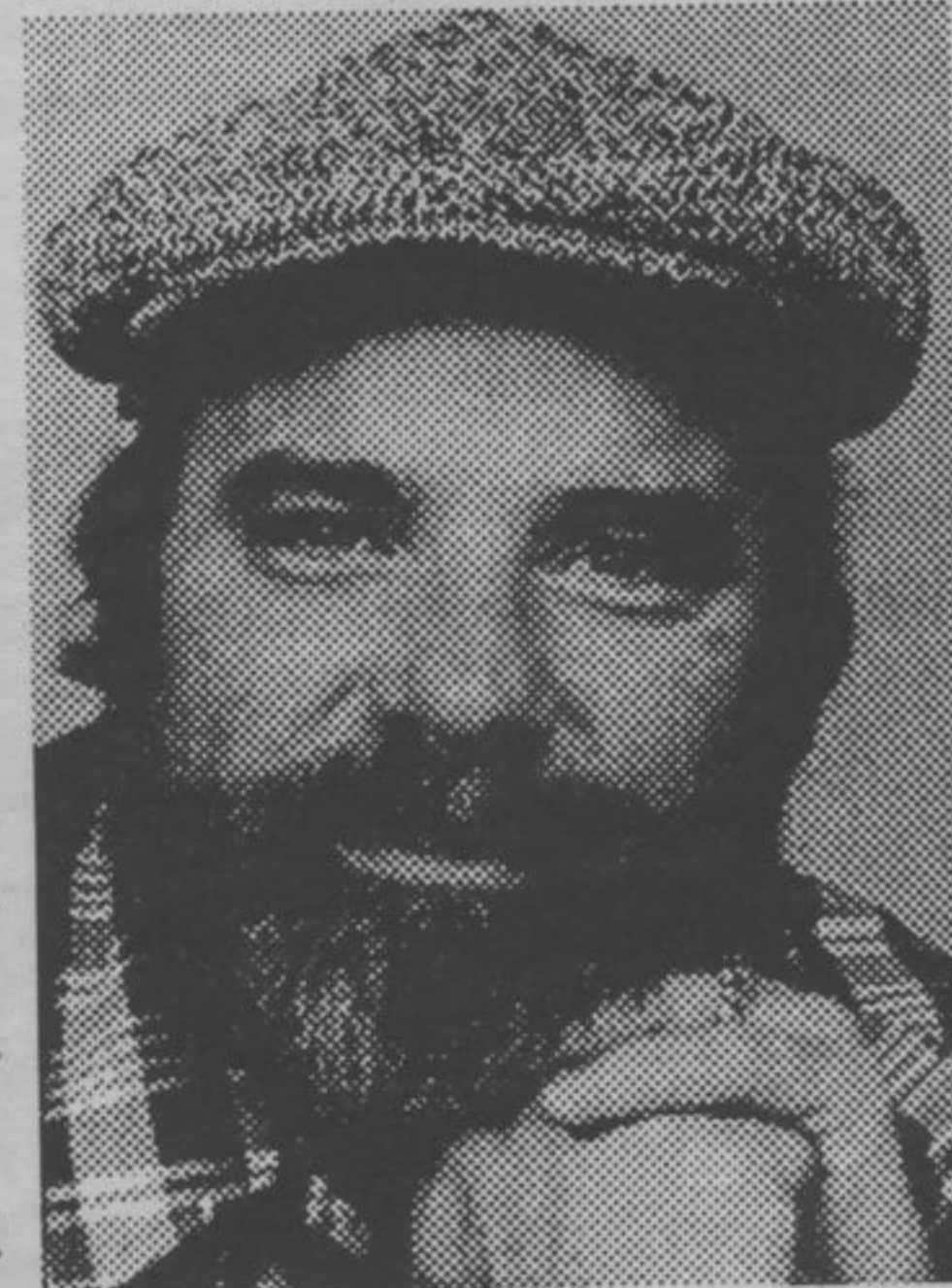
That could be very dangerous. I mean, just suppose that tomorrow some obscure professor at Dalhousie calls a press conference to announce new historical data on Queen Victoria. Turns out the Tiny Perfect Regent was actually

a child-beating, nose-picking, penny-pinching, racist, sexist, ageist kleptomaniac. Suppose that as a result of said professors revelations, Queen Victoria's image becomes a repugnant amalgam of Roseanne Barr crossed with Tammy Faye Bakker by way of Brunhilda. Suddenly the name of Britain's longest reigning monarch is anathema. Nobody wants to be associated with it.

Good bye Victoria. Not to mention Regina, Prince Albert and Consort, Alberta.

And then there's my personal geographical situation to consider. I live in Wellington County, not far from the city of Waterloo and the towns of Arthur and Wellesley. They even brew a beer hereabouts called Iron Duke.

All those names are of course, taken from one Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, most famous for thumping Napoleon at the battle of Waterloo.



Arthur Black

By all accounts the man was a genuine hero - but so were Custer and Lenin a few short years ago. What if some historian discovers that the Duke of Wellington really wore army boots of clay? What if that sets off another frenzy of name changing?

I could wind up with an awful lot of blank spots on my driver's licence.

But it's not just my problem. It's your problem too. If they can make a virago out of Victoria and a wretch out of Wellington you better start fretting about your own geographical identity, chum.

Pretty soon the name changers could be re-dubbing whole countries - whole continents even.

Including the one you and I inhabit.

Sure. All they have to do is dig up some dirt on that 15th century Italian sailor, Vespucci - what was his first name again?

Oh, right - Amerigo.