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## Politicians are fiddling while Canada burns

As the on again, off again Constitutional Committee continues to trip over its heels, and the Mulroney government sends out conflicting signals to the country about how the constitutional mess will finally be solved (yes we'll hold a referendum, no we won't—well, maybe we'll think about it, but definitely nothing's ruled out), it's becoming clear that the reason for the constitutional preoccupation is that it's actually *easier* to deal with than the crumbling economy.

Manufacturing is being decimated in Southern Ontario, and mineral prices are down in the North; Quebec's economy is in the same state as Olympic Stadium—falling apart fast while everybody blames everybody else; the Maritimes never did come out of the last recession, and fish stocks aren't getting any bigger; and Western farmers had a good harvest this year, and all it did was show how complicated their crisis really is.

Add to this equation the heaviest level of taxation—both personal and business—Canada has ever seen. But all this is only half the story. Governments are so broke, even Floyd Laughren is saying Ontario has to cut spending.

No money is available, so there is no long-term planning. People displaced by the Free Trade Deal are not being retrained. Instead, they are becoming the part of the permanent welfare class, trained for jobs that no longer exist.

And if Quebec does leave, it will be hard on the rest of Canada. Mind you, it will be harder on Quebec—even the separatists are starting to admit that—but won't help the rest of us.

So it's no wonder that—faced with these truly intractable problems—our leaders choose to preoccupy themselves with the comparatively easy problem of getting a constitutional agreement.

At a time when our best minds should be trained on solving our internal economic problems, when we should be addressing structural impediments to long-term economic development, our governments are setting up committee after committee to gaze at our navels. If we spent half the amount of time, energy and ingenuity on solving our economic problems as we do on the constitution, I doubt unemployment in Ontario would be approaching double figures.

It's becoming increasingly clear that the parties involved in the constitutional debate feel time is on their side, and, as a result, don't feel inclined to compromise. It's time to set the constitutional agenda on the back burner. If Quebec decides it can't wait, well, it's doubtful an acceptable agreement could be reached now anyway. But it's equally likely that Quebecers would use the time to get their own house in order before attempting anything as economically ruinous as separation. But there's no sense in trying to save the political structure of a crumbling house.

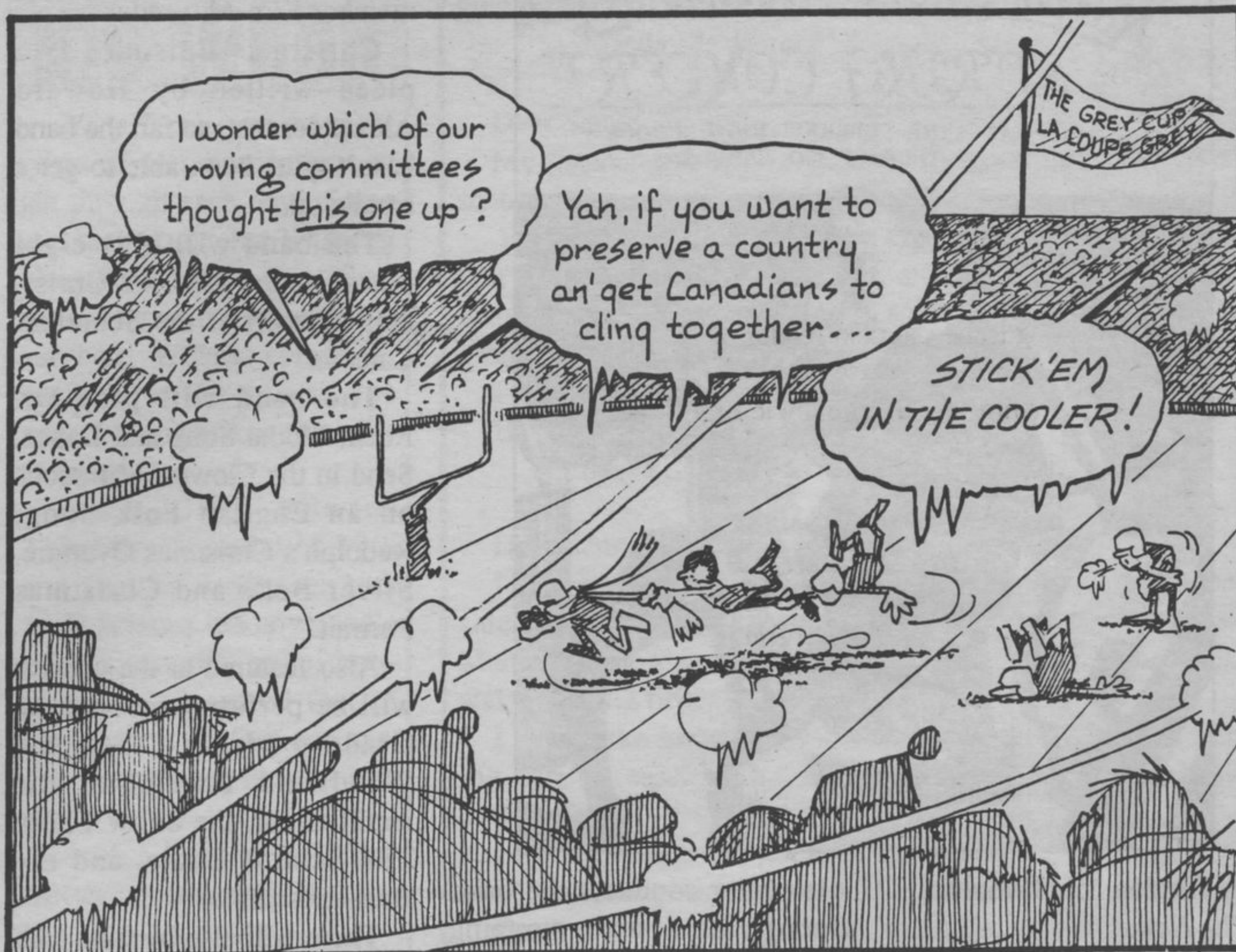
### Letters to the Editor

The Terrace Bay Schreiber News welcomes letters to the editor on any subject.

Letters must be signed and have the phone number and address of the author for verification. We will not knowingly print false libelous or anonymous comments.

Letters to the Editor are important to community newspapers. They serve to reflect opinions of members of the community we serve. However, we must insist on these rules to ensure that this very important forum is used responsibly.

Letters can be mailed to the News, Box 579, Terrace Bay, P0T 2W0, or dropped off at the News office, 13 Simcoe Plaza in Terrace Bay.



## The North's catalogue

Here are two infallible ways to tell that Christmas is coming. Number one: every shopping mall you pass is playing a tinny version of The Little Drummer Boy, by the Harry Simeon Chorale. Number two: every time you turn around you stumble across another brand new Canadian book, freshly published in the hope that you'll buy it to stuff in somebody's stocking.

Sure are a lot of them out there. Pierre Berton, of course. And Margaret Atwood. And Peter Newman. Kurt Browning and Darryl Sittler to boot.

Heck, even I have a seasonal hardcover offering, currently teetering half way between the New York Times Bestseller List and the Coles Remainders Table.

But the Canadian book that's captured my heart this year isn't an Ottawa expose or a Maritimes novel or the memoirs of some Bay Street robber baron.

It's a catalogue.

In fact, it's official title is *Another Lost Whole Moose Catalogue*.

The ALWM Catalogue is difficult to describe. Physically, it's 156 pages of print and photographs sandwiched between covers that measure ten inches wide and fifteen inches deep -- which is to say, large and ungainly.

Kind of like a moose.

As for the material between the covers...that's REALLY difficult to describe. You can find out how to build a log cabin in this catalogue. You can also learn how to say "this is a moose" in Athapaskan dialect.

The catalogue was conceived, birthed and nurtured in the Yukon. It bills itself as a collection of Yukon lore that should get anyone, from greenhorn to sourdough, safely through a bad winter in the Great White North.

Well, *Another Lost Whole Moose Catalogue* will probably do that alright - but just between you and me, you don't have to be a Yukoner to get your fancy tickled by this book.

That's because the compilers stirred in one tangy ingredient not commonly featured in catalogues -- a sense of humour.

You can find a serious essay entitled

"Dogs In Pick-ups". (Opening paragraph: "Every real Yukoner has a real pickup. Not one of those wimpy little tin cans from J.A.Pan that gets 30 miles to a fart.")

And another about "Safe Sex in the Yukon" (Important tip: never leave condoms in your glove compartment at 40 below).

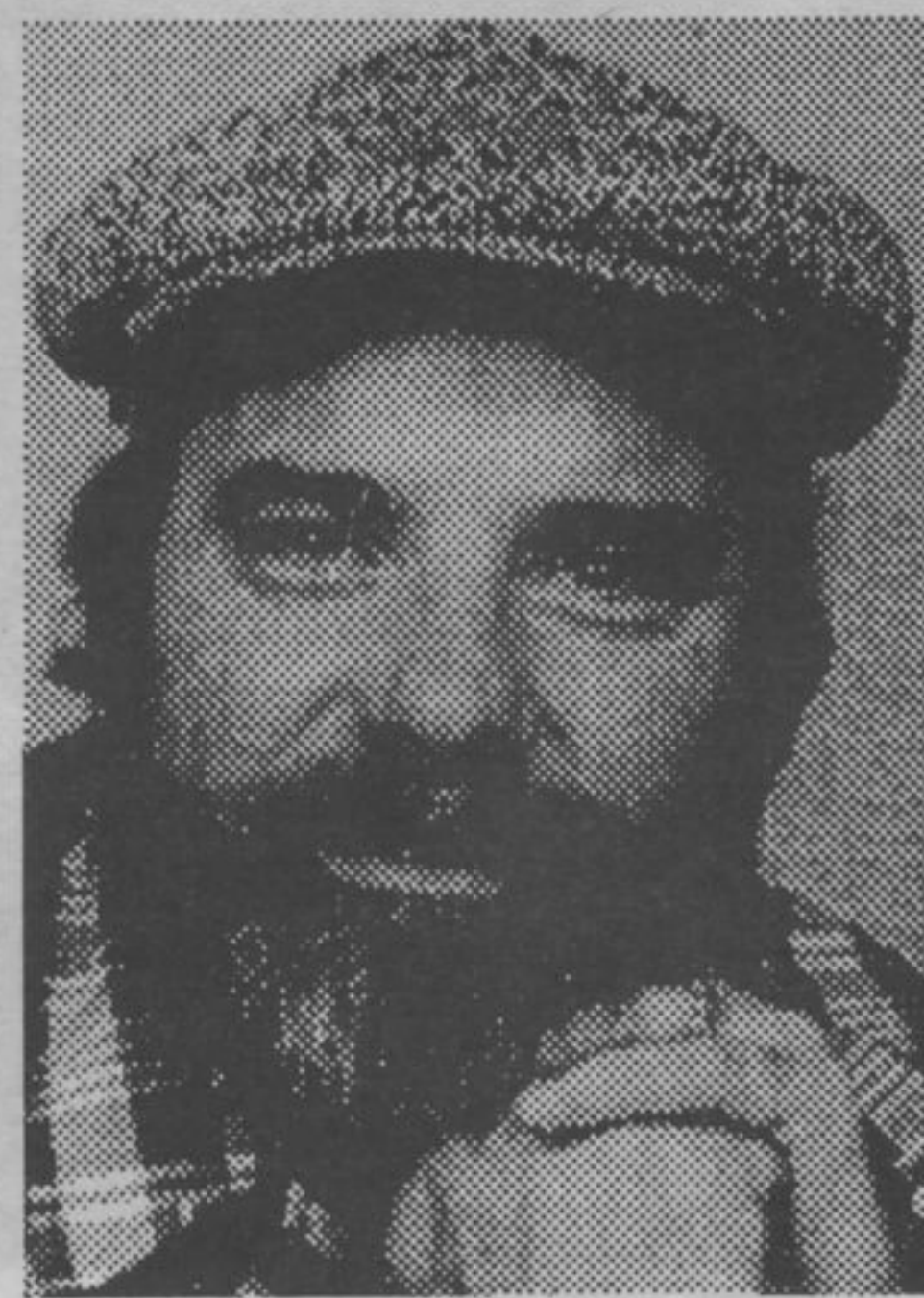
In fact, *Another Lost Whole Moose Catalogue* is only marginally about

moose. It's central theme is something infinitely more important. It's about The North -- which I think is what being Canadian is all about.

Every Canuck has The North in his soul. Doesn't matter if it turns out to be the Arctic Barrens or the Haliburton Highlands. Sure, most of us eke out our MacDonalidized lives within a couple of hours drive of the U.S. border, but that doesn't change what's in our backyard: The North. It's always there and it shapes us all for life. "A window out onto infinity" the French historian Andre Siegfried called it.

Well, this book is sort of a family album from the other side of the windowpane.

*Another Lost Whole Moose Catalogue*, available from *Lost Moose Publishing*, 58 Kluane Crescent, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3G7.



Arthur Black