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## Let's face it: the GST's a disaster

It may be a cliché, but it's true nonetheless: the only sure things are that we're going to die and we're going to pay a lot of taxes before then.

In Jesus' time, tax collectors were outcasts in society — in fact, one of the things the Pharisees criticized Him for was the sin of eating meals with tax collectors. The Sheriff of Nottingham, Robin Hood's evil rival, was primarily a tax collector and was hated for that reason.

Well, we've come a long way since then, and, happily, many things have changed: we no longer believe evil demons make us sick, women are no longer the legal property of men, and we have a much more progressive view of tax collectors themselves. But some things haven't changed: we still pay taxes and we still hate it.

Many people hate the Federal Government because of Free Trade, or Meech Lake, or even because of the Prime Minister's personality. But nothing compares to the venom spewed at the Tories after the Goods and Services Tax was implemented a year ago this month.

I don't count myself among those who would like to see the entire Mulroney government dumped in a vat of boiling oil — which puts me in a minority — but it's clear that the GST has been a major blunder, and at the very least is in need of a major overhaul.

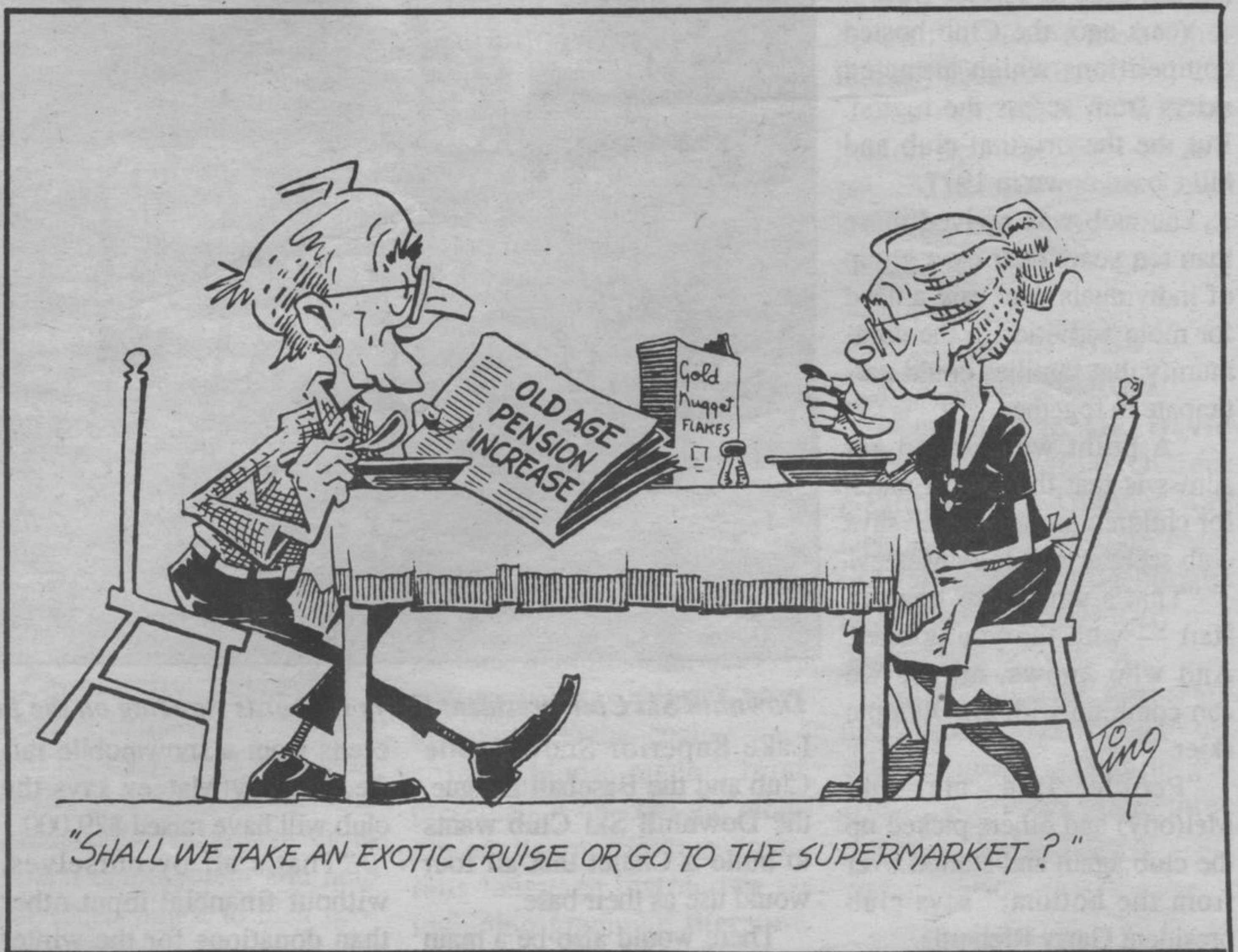
The whole intent behind the tax was to give Canadian manufacturers a level playing field on which to compete against the Americans in Free Trade. Well, since the FTA and the GST a record number of manufacturing jobs — particularly in the southern part of our province — have headed to the U.S. While some employment adjustment had to be expected after Free Trade, the government has done next to nothing to help retrain the workers whose jobs are gone forever. And the ridiculously high prices at cash registers has driven an entire generation of Canadian shoppers to places like Duluth, Sault Michigan, and Buffalo.

So what we have is a tax that apparently hasn't helped manufacturers and has done serious damage to Canadian retailers.

As someone mentioned to me recently, it isn't a sign of a bad government to back down on a policy that hasn't worked. As a matter of fact, doing something about the GST would be the smartest thing this government has done since . . . well, since a long time.

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Apologies to any group or individual whose event was left out of the year in review section of the Jan. 7 edition of *The News*. Any oversights were unintentional.



## Keep politicians in Ottawa

Here's a notion to stir-fry in your brain pan as you hunker down and shiver through yet another Canuck winter: how about moving the nation's capital to . . . Winnipeg?

Put down that snowball, madame — it's not my idea. It belongs to Eric Kierans, venerable ex-politician and radio pundit. He floated the concept on the CBC national radio show *Morningside* back about Christmas time.

Well, when you think about it, it sort of makes sense. Winnipeg is a lot closer to the geographical bellybutton of the nation than Bytown-on-the-Rideau. And moving the capital is certainly in vogue, internationally. The Germans shut down East Berlin last year. And future Russian politicians will be pointing their chauffeur-driven Ladas towards Minsk, not Moscow.

Plus — let's face it — this country needs a kind of coast-to-coast crosscheck right now. Something to shake us out of our separatist stupor; to wake us up out of our constitutional coma. We need a kind of national, head-clearing Participation project.

And what could be more intrinsically satisfying than a campaign to truck all those Ottawa windbags to Winnipeg? Can't you just hear John Crosbie shouting for a taxi at the corner of Portage and Main?

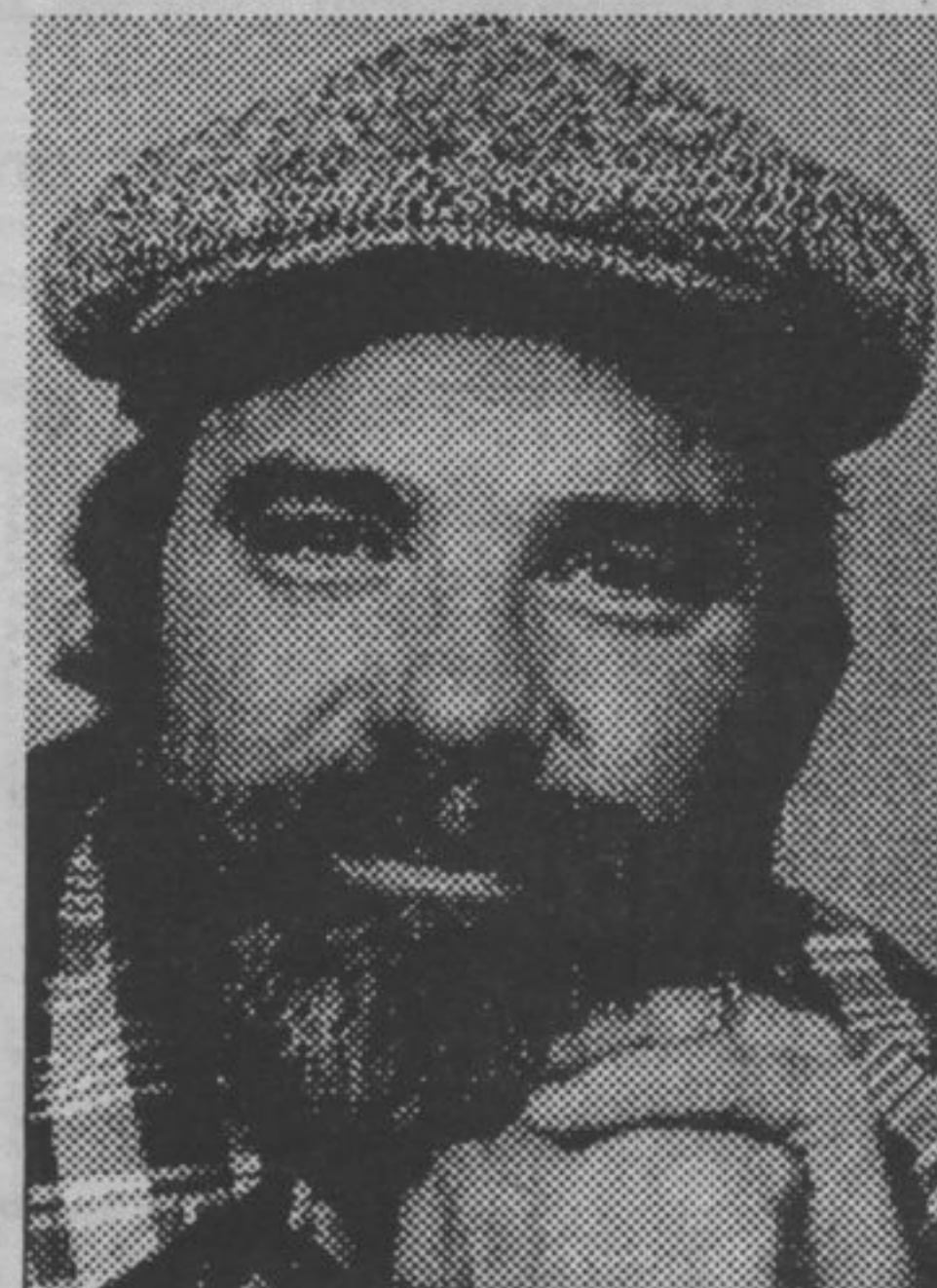
Can't you visualize Sheila Copps burning crosses on the lawn of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange? Mila Mulroney shopping at The Bay? Brian tip-toeing through a late spring blizzard in his slip-on Gucci loafers?

It's a tempting thought, alright . . . but let's face it: it's just not fair.

Look at what those worthy Winnipeggers already have to put up with. Ferocious winters. Blitzkrieg invasions of mosquitoes each summer. Plus the lousiest downhill skiing this side of Death Valley.

Can we expect them to endure all that —

and Michael Wilson too? I think not. I predict a populist backlash that will make the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 look like a Presbyterian Sunday School picnic. I foresee barricades on the TransCanada; floating mines on the Red and Assiniboine Rivers . . . manifestos demanding full autonomy and language rights for the duchies of Steinbach, Rosenfeld, Gimli and St. Boniface.



Arthur Black

I envision commando death squads of fanatical North Enders all disguised in Larry Zolf masks. I see them invading the House of Commons to lob netfuls of dead Winnipeg Goldeye at the fear-frozen MP's sitting rigidly below.

And suppose Winnipeggers win? Suppose the politicians, faced with such implacable western wrath, cave in and rescind the order to make Winnipeg the new capital — what then?

Do we try to move it to

Moose Jaw? Flin Flon? Pond Inlet?

Tempting. But don't forget there are people in Pond Inlet too. Law-abiding people with a right to peace and harmony.

In fact, that's probably why they live in Pond Inlet.

Up there, they don't have to worry about politicians popping out from behind a pingoe to shake their mitten and kiss their kids and promise a free snowmobile in every garage if only they'll remember to vote for him next election.

No, if you think it through, I believe you'll agree the best solution is to leave our federal politicians right where they are. After all, Ottawa's used to them.

Besides, there's a real bonus for the rest of us if we stick with the status quo:

Sending our politicians to Ottawa is a sure-fire way to get them out of town.

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