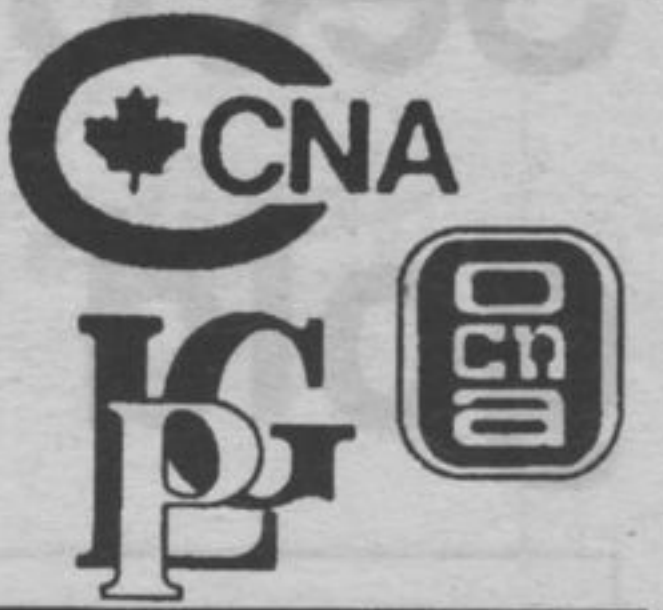


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## Things could be worse—but they could be better too

I don't know what it is about the Federal Liberals, but since Trudeau they seem to have a knack for picking the right leader at the wrong time. When Trudeau left, the party christened John Turner as its leader, just in time to face the first native Quebecers leading the Tories in Conservative history.

Even though Turner looked rusty, and the more people saw him, the less he resembled a Prime Minister, the party hierarchy was adamant he would succeed Trudeau.

Never mind that Jean Chretien was well known and popular (at the time) in and outside of Quebec, Turner was elected to lead a split party that never really rallied around him. As a parting shot, Trudeau riddled him with the infamous patronage appointments, and Chretien sniped at him incessantly from the sidelines.

Humiliated, Turner called it quits after losing his second election in a row, and the party made it two for two by turning to the now passé Chretien instead of Paul Martin Jr.

Because of his perceived role in the death of the Meech Lake Accord—and his antiquated vision of Canada—Chretien's support in Quebec is embarrassingly low. He even has to run in New Brunswick to get a seat. And his inability to master English limits his appeal in the rest of Canada, particularly in the west.

And like Turner before him, Chretien has stumbled badly. His ill-defined stands on everything from Free-trade (let's get a better deal) to the GST (let's replace it with something) has neutralized the populist appeal he had when he was in the Trudeau cabinet.

Before last weekend's convention, the only real success he has had as leader came in policy sessions orchestrated by (who else?) Paul Martin.

And despite mainly positive media coverage, the convention only papered over cracks still evident in the party. For example, the party is still broke—it can only dream of having as much money as the NDP.

His image problem in Quebec continues, witnessed by the fact that only 1/3 of eligible delegates from Quebec bothered to attend, even though the convention was held in Hull. And the party's reaffirmation of traditional Liberal policies fails to point the party in any new direction. It's fine to be in favour of universality, but it's already in place. How do they plan to save it?

Demographically, things are pretty depressing too. Quebec will probably vote Bloc Québécois next time, the West largely reform and NDP. Only Atlantic Canada will go all Liberal. The party will probably split our province with Reform.

Still, I wouldn't be too upset if I was Jean Chretien. Things could be worse. He could be Brian Mulroney.



## Bring back Britain's butlers

*An aristocracy . . . is like a chicken with its head cut off; it may run about in a lovely way, but in fact, it's dead.*

Nancy Mitford

Ms. Mitford is right, of course. Kings and queens and Dukes and Duchesses would make no sense at all in a rational world.

But then, when's the last time anybody mistook planet Earth for a rational planet?

This is a place where religious leaders can solemnly order the murder of a man for writing a book.

It's a place where a guy can earn \$5 million U.S. a year for throwing a leather-covered sphere past another guy 66 feet away.

This is a place that picked Brian Mulroney to run Canada. Twice.

So perhaps it's no surprise that Ivor Spencer's enterprise is doing swimmingly well, thank yew veddy much.

Mister Spencer runs a school in London, England. A school for butlers.

A person might be forgiven for thinking that butlers had gone the way of the brontosaurus, the dodo and the Edsel. Back in the 1930s there were 30,000 of the creatures in Britain alone, but WW II cost Britain mightily, and butlers—an expensive appendage during the best of times—began to disappear. By the 1980s there were fewer than a hundred full time butlers in the United Kingdom.

Now they're coming back. Or so says Ivor Spencer—and he's in a position to know. Mister Spencer's school grooms, hones and places "personal servants" with wealthy households all over the world.

It's not a bad gig. About \$50,000 a year with free room and board, a car, a clothing allowance and the chance to serve tea to the rich and famous.

But there's a downside. Rich people are not necessarily nice people—and even when the boss is a 24-carat jerk, the butler is expected to lower his eyes and take it, like a good and loyal

servant. A butler is unflinchingly stiff-upper-lipped. His employer can get drunk, shout obscenities, beat the dog and swing naked from the chandeliers but nary a whisper of it will be breathed by his butler.

"We never talk," says Spencer. "That is your death knell as a butler."

Which is not to say that butlers are a bunch of craven, lickspittle doormats shuffling and cringing through life. Some of them have immense responsibilities which include everything from balancing the family budget to ironing the morning newspaper.

A butler may not talk back, but he's nobody's punching bag either. Indeed, their grace under pressure is legendary.

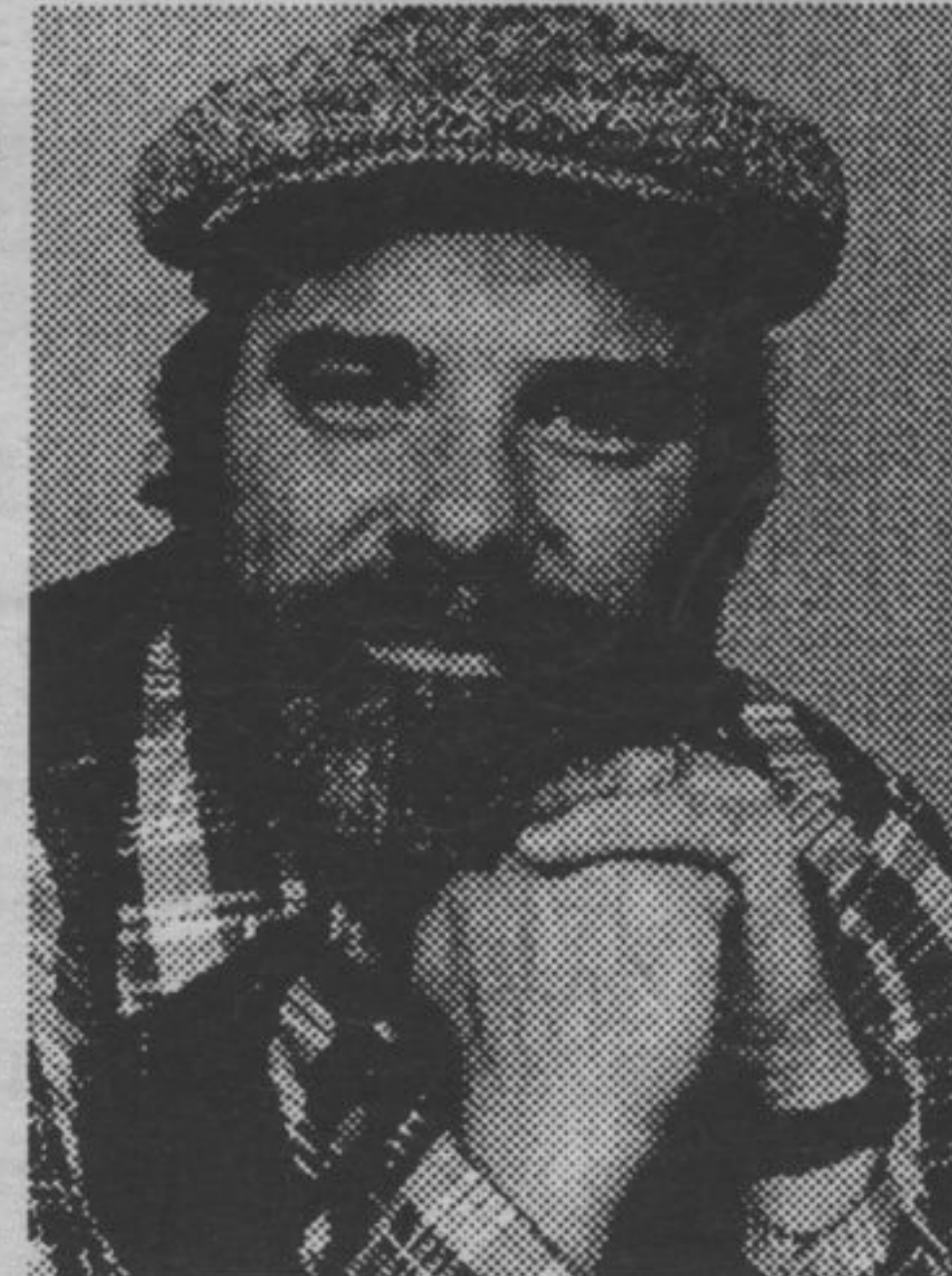
For instance, the butler of Lord Dunsany Castle was raided and ransacked by the "Black and Tans"—troops of the British government. Lord Dunsany's butler stood unmoved as the soldiers

reduced the castle interior to rubble. As they trooped out the smashed front door, the butler intoned "Who shall I say called?"

Then there's the New York mansion story told by Coburg, Ontario's own Marie Dressler in her autobiography *My Own Story*. "I was going upstairs to leave my wrap when I noticed a beautifully carved bannister. 'If I don't slide down that,' I told myself, 'I'll die.'

There was nobody in sight. I took a deep breath and landed in a heap at the foot of the stairs. Imagine my horror when I saw bearing down on me the butler, whose frosty hauteur had frozen me when I arrived.

He picked me up and dusted me off without a flicker of expression on his correct countenance, meanwhile murmuring cordially, 'Very good miss. Very good indeed. I've always wanted to take a go at it myself.'"



Arthur Black

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