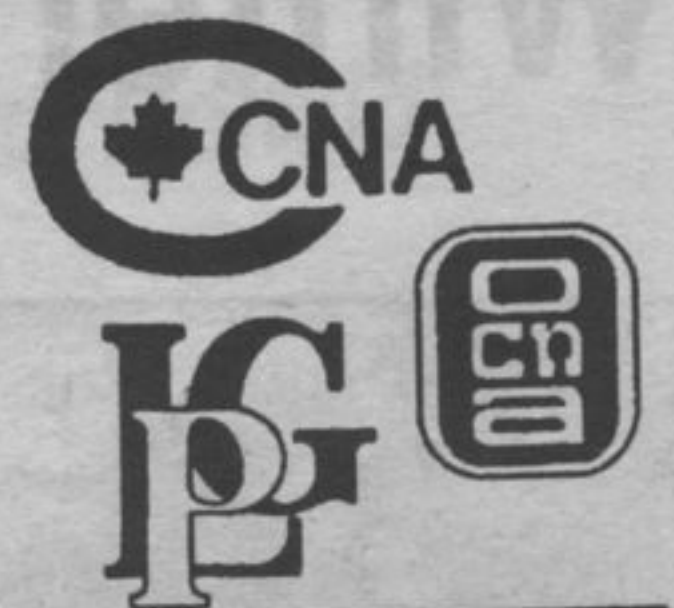


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Canada's mood is radically different than it was in 1980

I'm old enough to remember the 1980 referendum in Quebec pretty clearly. Despite the fact many people were tired of him, most of Canada rallied around then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau because we believed he was the one who could save the country. There was a feeling of desperate urgency, that something had to be done to convince Quebec to stay.

After the vote, I thought something had been settled, that Canada had won and separatism was dead.

Move the calendar ahead 12 years, and we're facing the prospect of *another* referendum in Quebec. But la belle provençe—and the world—has changed a great deal since 1980.

This time around, it's difficult to tell the federalists from the sovereigntists in Quebec. In 1980, the question was does Quebec want to remain a part of Canada or not; today it seems Quebec is saying 'offer us de facto sovereignty or we'll leave.'

Well, what's the difference?

In 1980 there was a segment of French Quebec who were still passionate about staying in Canada, that considered it their country. Today, the province seems swept up in the nationalistic tide that's swamping the world with new countries at the pace of about one a week. Quebec seems determined to join the ranks of the soon-to-be-disillusioned new states founded on the misconception that statehood is a panacea for whatever ails you.

And the urgent desire to save Canada has been replaced with an irritated fatigue and a strong desire to move on to something else. People are tired of politicians, of the constitution, and of the Quebec question. The mood seems to be "let's just settle this for good, and if Quebec wants to go, let it go."

It's becoming increasingly apparent that Quebecers don't want to be a part of Canada, at least not the way Nova Scotia or Manitoba are part of Canada. And it's also becoming clear that most Canadians won't agree to special status for Quebec.

Although the recession has somewhat dampened support for the independence option, there remains an irreconcilable gap between what Quebec is demanding as its price for staying in the federation, and what English Canada is willing to offer.

Remember how Meech Lake failed because of the distinct society clause? The Beaudoin-Dobbie reports offers that and a whole lot more, but no Quebecer of any consequence in the current debate has publicly supported it. And Jean Chretien just doesn't count.

So what happens when an immovable object collides with an unstoppable force?

Sadly, we'll find out soon enough.

A headline in last week's paper contained an unpardonable grammatical error. The headline on page 9 read "could have went" instead of "could have gone". I hope my grade 7 English teacher never finds out.



PC has many meanings

The great thing about the future is that it comes just one day at a time

Abraham Lincoln

Well, that may have been true in Abe's day, but no more. Nowadays, when I contemplate the future, I think of that famous Alex Colville painting—the one that shows an enormous freight train hurtling along the tracks. And running straight toward the oncoming train, a galloping stallion. I think of the train as the future.

I'm the horse.

Or some portion thereof.

The future has never been more overwhelming—or overlapping. Consider: there are people alive right now who were born before a single airplane or television signal sullied the heavens.

Let's ponder something much smaller than that. Let's ponder the letters P and C.

When I was born, "PC" stood for a flatfoot, a cop, a patrolman.

As in "Police Constable O'Casey apprehended the miscreant and took him down to the station."

A little later in my life, PC took on a party affiliation: Progressive Conservative. John Diefenbaker was a PC. So was Robert Stanfield and Flora MacDonald and Joe... Joe....

Oh, you know who I mean.

Then, just a few years ago, PC underwent another metamorphosis.

Suddenly PC no longer described that herd of brontosaurus grazing mindlessly on the far right edge of the Canadian political savannah—now it was the designation for a mysterious slab of moulded plastic which unfolded to reveal a screen and keyboard.

Enter "PC" the Personal Computer.

And while I was still struggling to find the ON switch of my laptop, damned if the letters didn't hopscotch into the void only to re-appear in yet another incarnation.

Nowadays, "PC" stands for Politically Correctness.

It's the new Puritanism and it's raging like a forest fire through the groves of Academe. Squads of self-appointed PC Thought Police scour the dorms and the classrooms for any signs of deviation from the Gospel According to Political Correctness.

Thus, a professor at Harvard is taken to task for dwelling on Shakespeare, Milton and Blake (Dead White Males are not Politically Correct.)

Thus, a private Catholic Hospital in Oak Park, Illinois is not allowed to erect a cross on its own smokestack because, according to the town council, "some local residents would be offended."

It gets sillier than that. A merchandise catalogue featuring a drawing of Porky Pig urging customers to "D-d-d-don't delay: D-d-d-d-o your holiday shopping today" attracted the wrath of a Stut-

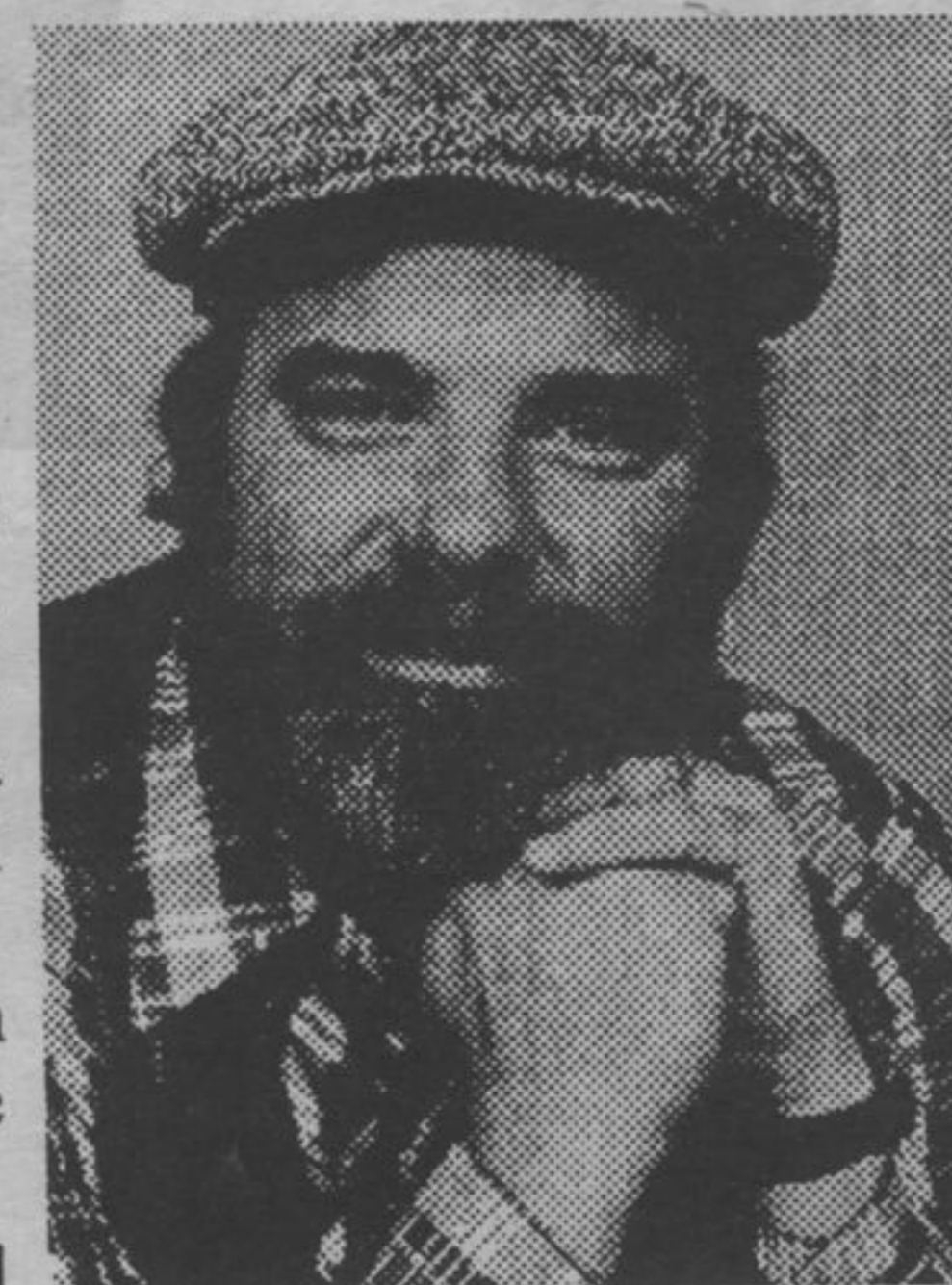
ter's Rights group.

Remember the re-issue of the Disney Classic movie Fantasia last year? Well, listen to the rap sheet that cartoon's racked up: Dieters United objected that the depiction of tutu-clad hippos ridicules fat people; radical conservationists protested the conspicuous waste of water in the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" section; an anti-drug lobbyist railed that the dancing mushrooms in the Nutcracker Suite portion were clearly hallucinogenic.

Oh yes, and one child was frightened by the graphics that accompanied "Night on Bald Mountain."

Personally, I'm hoping that PC will re-invent itself again before the PC Nazis gain so much ground. Some "PC" thing that would evolve smoothly and naturally out of the Politically Correctness movement as we know it.

May I suggest Pure Crap?



Arthur Black

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