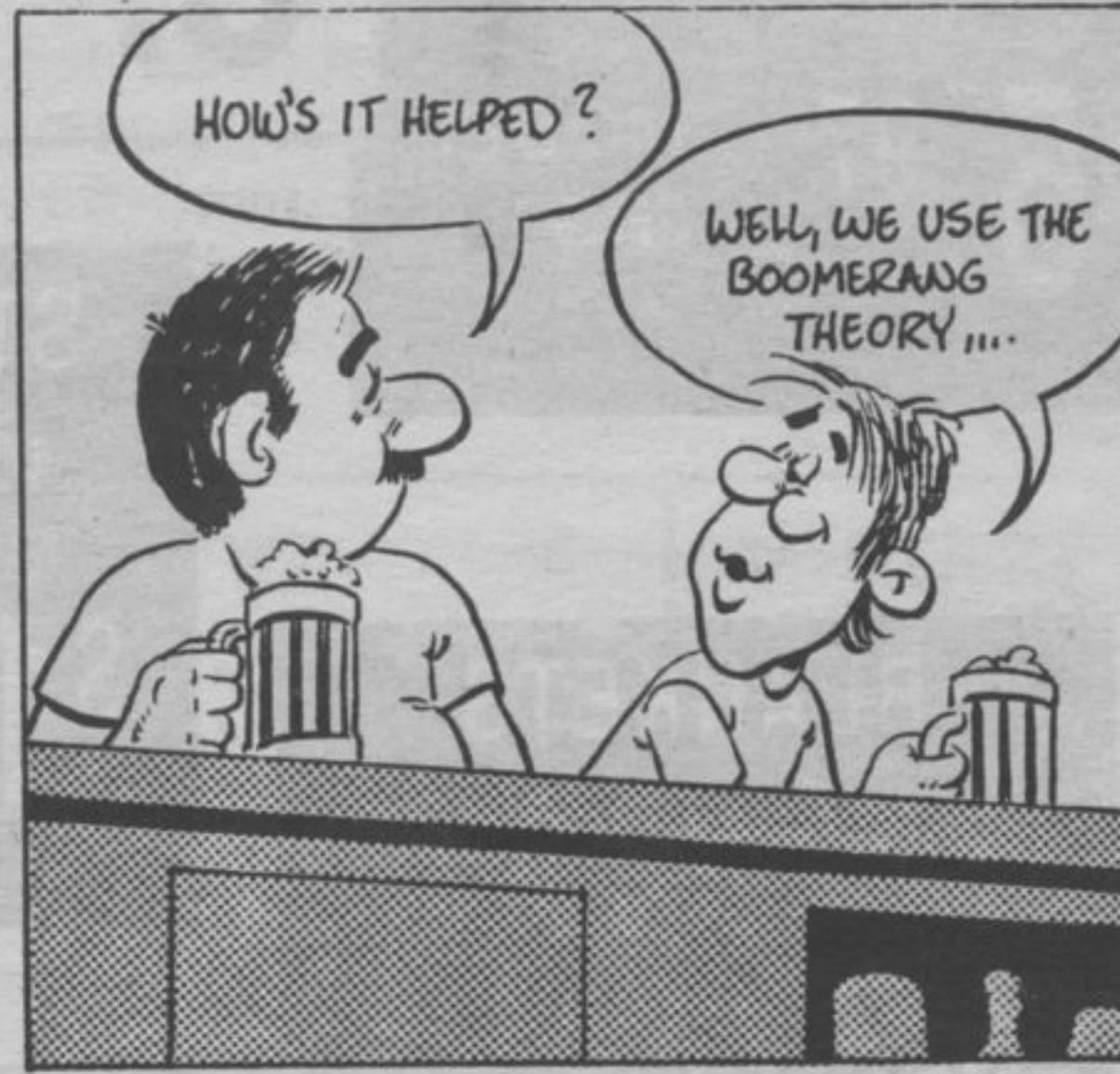
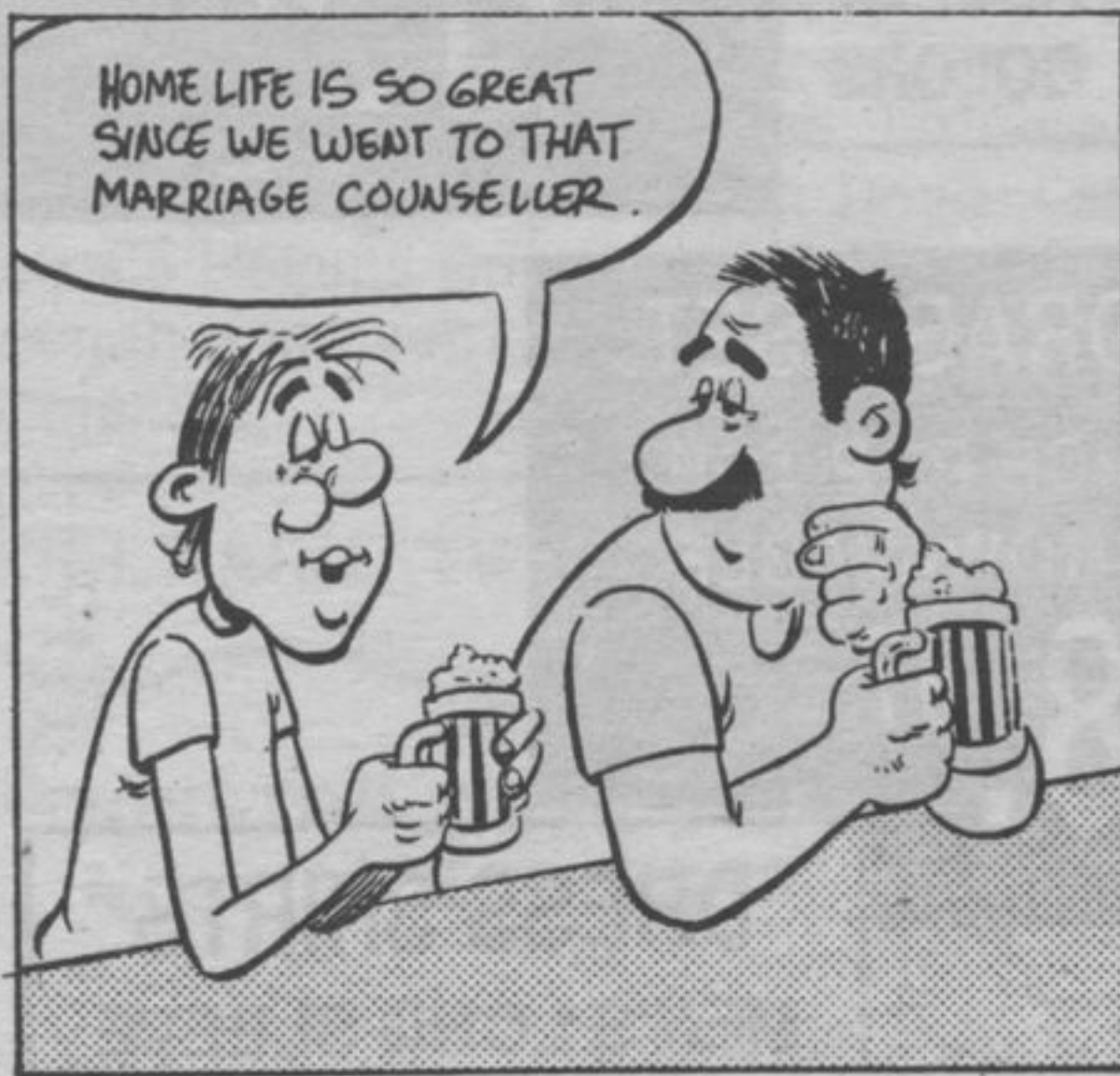


THE BUSHWHACKERS



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Northern Insights

continued from page 5
 tion-framing is likely too late, when he pointed out: "even if the demand (for constitutional status for municipalities) is shelved, at least it is on the shelf for further consideration."

Shelving the issue for later consideration puts Canadian taxpayers in an awkward situation. Assuming that Ottawa and the premiers manage to work out a power-sharing formula of "decentralized federalism" that satisfies Quebec and aboriginal concerns in this "Canada Round," municipalities will remain on the outside,

continued on page 13

Intrepid snowmobiler: The communicator's the best so far

by Craig Nicholson
 Lately I have seen several local sledders with strange antennas on the sides of their helmets. These were attached to a small black box with "The Communicator" stamped on

the side, which has proved to be the most convenient new safety accessory of recent years. I tried one and was impressed.
 Manufactured by a Canadian Company, The Communica-

tor allows you to talk with your companions without having to stop. Having already tried several different voice-activated head-sets, I was skeptical. They had each proved unsatisfactory for snowmobiling due to varying combinations of poor reception, low temperature sensitivity, fragility, and/or transmitting problems caused by wind and engine noise.

The Communicator overcomes more of these problems than any other headset.

My initial concern was that the apparatus would be awkward or insecure. Neither proved to be the case. The little box that attaches to the left exterior side of any helmet rim and a velcro fastener. They withstood branch whipping, helmet dropping, freezing rain and being gnawed at by a curious pup.

If you decide to use the included earphones, there is very little other installation involved, but putting the helmet on and off can be awkward.

Opting for the accessory

helmet speakers will make them a permanent helmet fixture, but alleviates both the inconvenience and possible discomfort of the ear plugs. I recommend the helmet speakers as being much easier on the ears over the long run.

The battery pack is separate so that it can be clipped or carried near your body warmth to prolong battery life. The 6 AA batteries last a long time, but as I became more dependent on communicating, I began to carry spares just in case. Rechargeables cannot be used since the six that will fit in the pack don't have sufficient power to run the unit.

Operation takes some getting used to. The system is voice activated and only one person can talk at a time. I've found that shorter messages are more easily understood, and that the use of the word "over" when your finished signals that it's the listener's turn.

Singing or whistling to yourself can be embarrassing, but now you won't miss those deer that everyone else is

always seeing.
 More than one Communicator in a group of sleds can be tricky, since the odds of "cross talk" increase and it's more difficult to I.D. each speaker. The best orientation is to go for a ride to test operations before you start trail riding.

The advantages of the Communicator are obvious. In the majority of situations, the range is more than adequate for the leader and the snowmobiler riding drag to talk.

So there is no longer any excuse for those annoying times when someone wants to stop, but can't get anyone's attention, or a machine breaks down and the front riders cruise merrily off into the sunset.

From a safety aspect, the lead machine can report back on upcoming trail conditions, unexpected stops and oncoming traffic; my wife, particularly, likes this feature and rides with more confidence knowing what's ahead.

The Communicator requires some adjustments. Your spark plugs and perhaps spark plug wires may have to be changed to resistor types to eliminate engine interference. If you are riding with several Communicators in the group, any one machine with improper plugs or wires can cause uncomfortable static, as do overhead wires or low batteries.

The mouth piece microphone must be tight against your lips to avoid wind interference and until you get used to this, transmissions may be garbled. The speaker must learn to maintain a constant and sufficient voice volume

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