

# Editorial

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## Poor old Canada simply cannot take any more body blows

Has there ever been a worse time to be a Canadian? We're in the middle of the longest recession in recent memory, and those of us who are working are taxed to the teeth. Quebec is probably going to separate, worsening our economic crisis and making everybody feel really crummy.

Annual payments on the federal deficit would pay for two more health care systems—which is crumbling—and the deficit is getting worse each minute. Worse still, there's no fish in Newfoundland and no jobs in Toronto or Calgary.

And just when we need her most, Barbara Frum is taken from us.

But the real crisis, what's really troubling the nation is, of course, the NHL strike. If ever there was a sign that Canada as we know it was coming to an end, this is it.

I think it's a cruel irony that, after countless years of suffering, the Leafs were finally making an exciting run for the playoffs, only to have it cut short by a strike. Maybe they wouldn't have made it, but they were so much fun to watch. After all the bad years, the playoff drive to me felt like the Stanley Cup finals.

But what really has me baffled is exactly what the strike is about. To hear Ziegler (not Jim, John) and Goodenow talk, everything seems more or less settled. The only thing I can make out is some kind of disagreement over hockey card revenues.

But I refuse to believe that the Leafs are going to be robbed of their first Stanley Cup in more than 20 years because of a dispute over hockey cards.

The owners say "we can't afford it", the players say "oh yes you can" and the fans say "c'mon guys, settle this already."

It's spooky when you think about it. Put Joe Clark where John Ziegler is, put Robert Bourassa where Goodenow is, and put Brian Mulroney where Don Cherry is and what do you have?

A guy saying we can't give you everything you want, another guy saying you better or else, and still a third full of hot air and blarney. And Canadians watch both scenarios, shaking their heads in disbelief that these pinheads have so much power.

Up until now, it was easy to fool ourselves and believe that hockey was a sport. But it's not. Just like baseball, football and other professional sports, hockey is a business, and hockey players are businessmen—look at Eric Lindros. Turns down \$50 million for ten years.

For some reason, I can't quite picture Eric playing on a frozen pond until his feet and hands turn blue.

It's possible that that the playoffs will be saved, and we can go back to living in front of the television set until the end of May. But things will never quite be the same again.



## Irritants foster our disunity

*Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity*

Marshall McLuhan

You probably don't know Joe Rosenthal, but I bet you know his work. Joe was an army photographer assigned to accompany US troops during the assault of the island of Iwo Jima during World War II. That's where Joe Rosenthal took one of the most famous photographs of all time.

It happened on Feb. 23, 1945. American Marines had just captured the highest point on Iwo Jima, an extinct volcano called Mount Suribachi.

Joe's camera recorded the event. His famous photo shows a rag tag gaggle of battleworn Marines tugging and hauling an American flag into the upright position. It's a remarkable photograph. You can smell the fear and the sweat and the cordite. And you can taste the triumph.

Sure, it's corny. The photo is as jingoistic as a half time Superbowl exhibition or a march by John Phillips Sousa—but you'd have to be dead not to be moved by it. It's the most quintessentially American photograph I know.

And then there's Canada. What kind of photographs might Joe Rosenthal snap if he was around today and we could hire him to cruise around the country with his Hasselblad catching the mood of Canada?

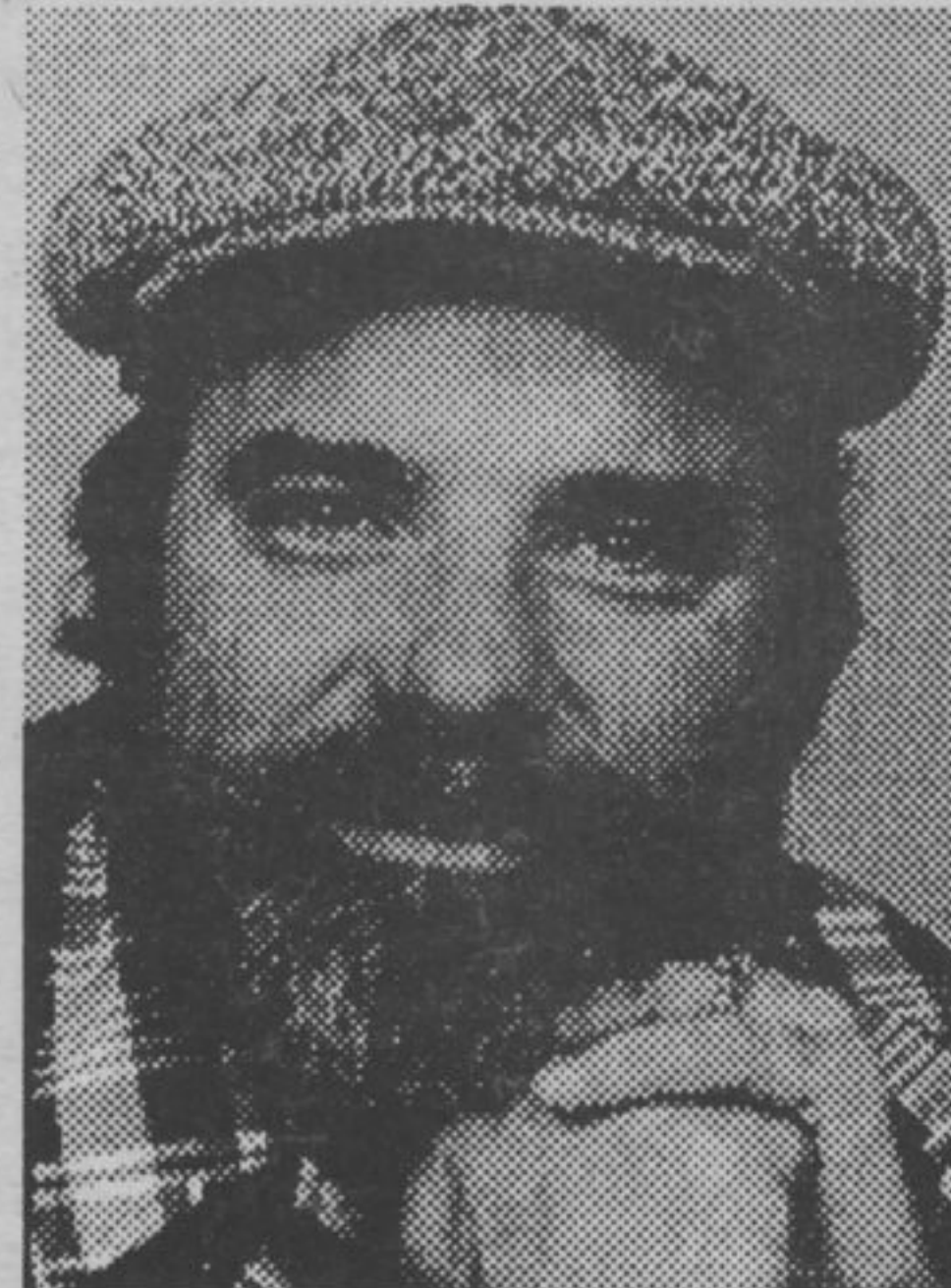
Well, if we wanted to stay with the flag theme, we might have sent Joe to the town of Gaspé, Quebec, to record the visit of Jacques Parizeau a few weeks ago. The leader of the Parti Québécois was in town for meetings, some of which took place in the Gaspé city hall.

A thoughtful municipal employee lowered the Canadian flag flying over city hall, so as "not to offend" Monsieur Parizeau during his visit.

At the time of this writing, Gaspé was a small town in Quebec, which was a province in a country called Canada.

But perhaps the Gaspé Flag Dip wouldn't offer

enough drama for Joe Rosenthal. Better we should have sent him on tour with the National Arts Centre Orchestra last month. To celebrate Canada's 125th birthday, the Orchestra toured the country, playing in 32 concert halls from Vancouver to Newfoundland. In 26 of those concert halls they play *O Canada* as a finale. The other six concert halls—all in Quebec—asked them not to. Like good Canadians, the National Arts Centre acquiesced. "We didn't want to politicize (the concerts)" said the orchestra manager.



Arthur Black

One of the concert venues that asked the orchestra not to perform *O Canada* was Baie Comeau.

At the time of this writing, Baie Comeau was the home town of Brian Mulroney, who was Prime Minister of a country called Canada.

But it isn't always a French-Canadian finger on the trigger that shoots this country in the foot. Consider the fiasco at the constitutional conference in Vancouver back in February. Here we had rep-

representatives from all of Canada, Quebec included, gathered to find some way to stitch up the bursting seams of our country. A national treasure by the name of Maureen Forrester stands up to spiritually cement the group by singing the National Anthem and . . . she sings it only in English.

Later she says she'd have been happy to sing it in French but nobody asked her to.

O, Canada.

Has the world ever known another nation so afraid to sing its song and show its colours? Don't get me wrong—I hate knee jerk patriotism—that "my country right or wrong" crap generals and politicians spout just before they send children off to die.

But surely there must be something—call it Pride of Family?—that sets you and I apart from Americans and Russians and asteroids and geraniums.

Isn't there?

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