

Opinion/Letters

Economic forum trotted out same old solutions



**NORTHERN
INSIGHTS**

by Larry Sanders



CBC Radio's national morning program Morningside recently spent its entire three hours discussing the shrinking and very troubled Canadian economy.

Over those three hours, the audience was given a menu including not just "experts" and pundits, but very ordinary Canadians who are now out of work—some of them for the first time in their lives: engineers, accountants, lawyers, skilled trades workers and journalists.

The program did *not* unearth anything new. The human tragedy stories of unemployment on the show were emotional but distressingly familiar. The spokespersons for labor and business resorted to the familiar refrains of blaming each other, or the federal government, for our economic difficulties. What I was hoping to hear was a new vision for the Canadian economy and practical steps to achieve that vision.

Even Peter Gzowski, Morningside's host, complained to panels of business executives and national union representatives that their rhetoric sounded all too familiar.

"It's the same old stuff I've been hearing for years," Gzowski complained. "Management claims that unions are not paying attention to their concerns about competitiveness, and unions are still blaming management for not involving workers in decision-making."

Gzowski's challenge was not dealt with. In effect, he was asking, "when will the rhetoric stop and new thinking begin?"

In the last hour, Gzowski interviewed Dennis Young, the former President of the now-moribund Canadian Association of Single-Industry Towns.

New vision

Young has been profiled several times in this column, dating back to his days of national prominence in 1989 when CBC Television's Sunday night business show Venture profiled his work in places like Hornepayne, Hearst and Mattice.

On Gzowski's program, Young trotted out the same message he's been promoting for years, that Canada's 4,000 single-industry towns are declining because the nation lacks an economic vision. Young used a familiar line, describing the situation of single industry towns as "frontier cancer."

Three year's ago, Young said the same thing, in an open letter to the federal government: "Ottawa lacks a vision about the future potential and development of our frontier regions."

"With no national vision and dynamic leadership, the decline (of frontier regions) will continue, and we will all likely end up living in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, or the United States."

The flip side of Young's message is that it's not just up to governments to find ways of coping with problems in the "frontier."

Young promotes bottom-up decision making, empowering local communities to chart their own course towards diversification and stability. Ottawa and Queen's Park, under this system, are relegated to the sidelines standing by with their chequebooks open.

Young admits that governments have adopted at least part of his strategy, by leaving single-industry towns to paddle their own canoes.

Frontier cancer

Unfortunately, not carrying out the other half of the strategy—articulating a frontier development strategy—leaves single-industry towns politically quarantined, unable to learn from each other's mistakes, and unable to see how their locally-based initiatives might fit into a provincial or national strategy.

For example, now that Domtar has announced the closure of its obsolete newsprint machine in Red Rock, 300 millworkers and an unknown number of bushworkers face unemployment.

The community of Red Rock did not have time to complete its diversification process while times were good, so Red Rock's economic base, housing prices and population will have to adjust to leaner times and speed up its efforts to diversify, largely through tourism.

The federal and provincial governments are rushing to Red Rock with the same band-aid, post-closure strategies used in Atikokan when Steep Rock and Caland Ore shut down over a decade ago, in Ear Falls when Stelco closed its Griffith mine three years later, and again when Abitibi-Price closed its Thunder Bay division mill a year ago.

The band-aids include an Adjustment Committee process, where unions, management and government agencies collaborate to find retraining opportunities for displaced workers.

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Letters to the editor

Great sports

I would like to say what a great weekend the Terrace Bay Ski Club supplied us at the Winter Carnival. I was surprised at the amount of activities available and the mass of volunteers to run them. I realize the amount of time and energy expended to organize an event this size. The festivities at the Legion on closing day were great fun, and I must admit there is a certain pleasure you obtain from watching someone get a pie in the face. Chris Joubert and Dean Main were great sports, as were many of the firemen.

P. Parker
Terrace Bay

Parent's criticism was unfair

I would like to respond to the letter in last week's paper ("Parents upset . . .", March 31). My husband and I have been involved in minor hockey for the past six years, and have been on the coaching team for the past four years.

I would like to know where L. Comeau and B. Jeffery received their information when they stated "We have formed travelling teams in every league." I have contacted all the coaches and, with the exception of one novice tournament in Thunder Bay and a combined Terrace Bay/Schreiber peewee team—which does not interfere with their regular schedule—*none* have travelling teams.

As for the statement that parents fight and bicker instead of cheering their children on, in all the tournaments I've attended I have never witnessed parents fighting amongst themselves.

This is an unfair statement for those parents to make when they, as first year novice parents, have only attended one, possibly two tournaments.

When an organization is dealing with approximately 200 children and parents, there's going to be some dissension. But instead of pulling a child out of hockey, parents should go to their executive's monthly meetings and voice their concerns.

If your beliefs are that strong, then get involved to try and change things.

Their was one statement in the letter that made sense: "How many kids make it to the NHL?" As we all know, very few.

Along the minor hockey path we may come across one or two players that possess the talent (to make it to the NHL.) If that possibility is there, then it's our obligation as parents and coaches to assist those individuals, even if it means putting a travelling team together made up of more advanced players for tournaments.

There are many parents who are involved with minor hockey, whether it be on the executive, the coaching staff, or those who are always available when volunteers are needed. They put in many hours to try and provide each child with enough hockey training so they can reach their potential. All these parents deserve much, much more than a letter like the one written last week.

Our minor hockey system is a good one. There are flaws, but many parents are uniting to try and iron these flaws out. Who benefits from this? Your child and mine.

In my opinion, it's not the minor hockey system that risks "losing our players, coaches and managers". Instead, it's parents who are so willing to criticize after having spent no more than three months in the league, and yet know all the facts although they have never voiced their concerns at a meeting. For that matter, they have never even attended a meeting to familiarize themselves with the rules, format and what's involved in minor hockey.

It's very unfair to base an opinion on all the leagues in minor hockey when looking through the eyes of first year novice.

I would like to state that I am not only writing this letter as a parent on the novice coaching staff, but also as a parent of a son who receives his share of ice time, and as a parent of a son who does his share of bench warming.

Thumbs up to the parents, volunteers and the system.

Joyce Berthelot
Schreiber

President apologizes for 'infraction'

To anyone that was offended by the statement made that downhill skiers breathe fresh air and not pollute it, we sincerely apologize for this infraction.

Sincerely,
Garry Richards
President,

Terrace Bay Ski Club

Make your voice heard

The Terrace Bay Schreiber News welcomes letters to the editor on any subject. Letters must be signed and have the phone number and address of the author for verification. We will not knowingly print false libelous or anonymous comments. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Letters can be mailed to the News, Box 579, Terrace Bay, P0T 2W0, or dropped off at the News office, 13 Simcoe Plaza in Terrace Bay.