

# Our Opinion

## Echoes of Bible Bill coming from Alberta

Back in 1935, in the depths of the Great Depression, a Social Credit politician named William "Bible Bill" Aberhart came to power in Alberta with what many voters hoped was the solution for hard times. Why, Aberhart asked, were people poor? Because they had no money, of course. Aberhart's solution? Print lots and lots of money.

Unfortunately for the people tricked into voting for him, Aberhart's plan had no basis in reality. The so-called "prosperity certificates", which he issued in place of real money, weren't worth the paper they were printed on. Voters who had been promised \$25 a month in relief payments were paid with the prettily-coloured paper that soon took its rightful place beside the Eaton's catalogue in the family outhouse. The hard times continued, and Aberhart's campaign platform went down in Canadian history as the most spectacular example of political wishful thinking.

Until now.

Reform Party leader Preston Manning's claim that if Canadians vote 'no' in the upcoming referendum it will mean an end to constitutional wrangling makes Bible Bill's claims seem reasonable in comparison.

Looking back at the history of the current constitutional debate, keep in mind that it took former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau more than ten years to patriate the constitution from Great Britain, and he did so without the consent of Quebec. That was a decade of wrangling with only ten people, and still he couldn't reach agreement with them all.

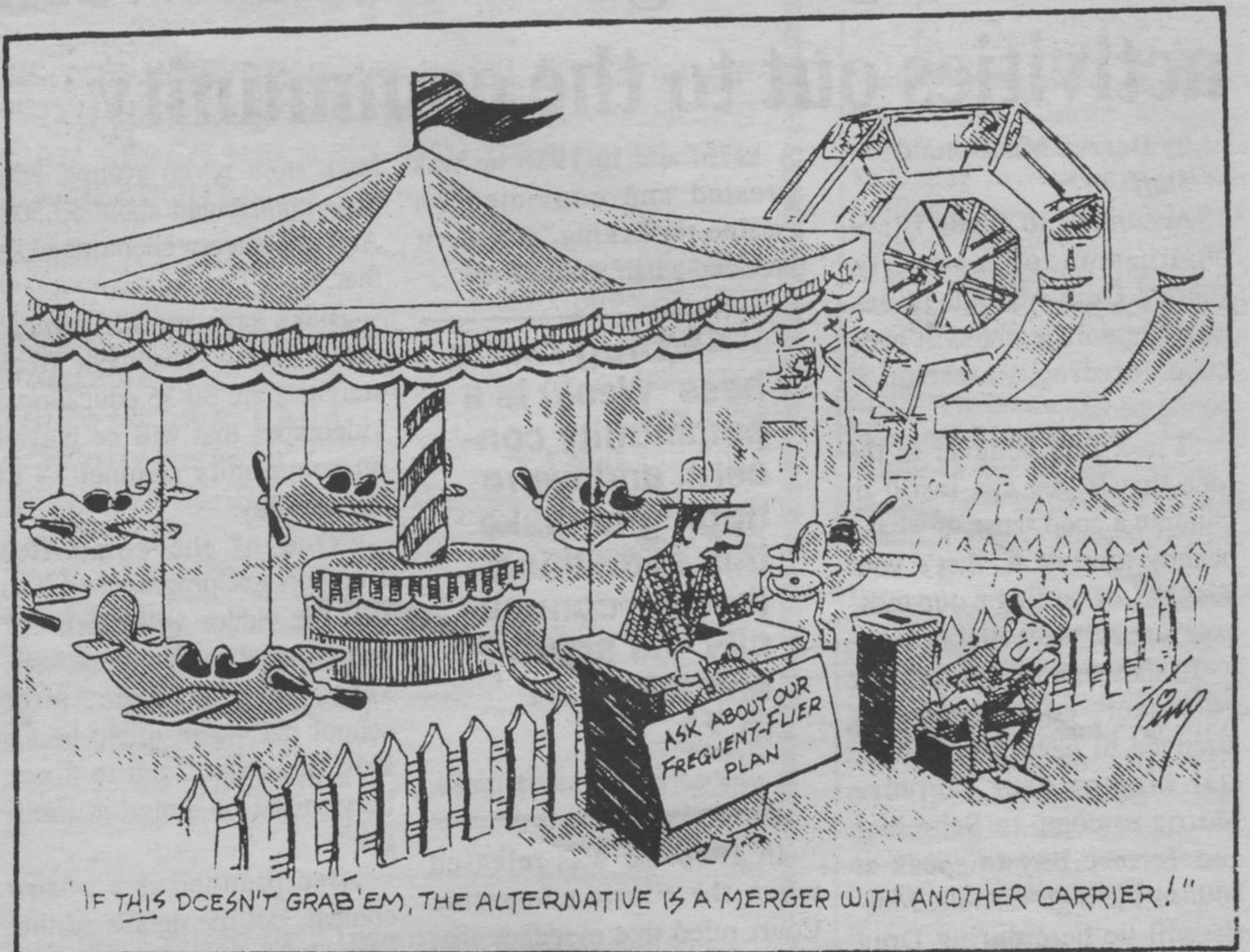
The purpose of the Meech Lake Accord was to bring Quebec back into the constitutional fold. When that deal began to unravel, largely as the result of sideline sniping from special interest groups wanting in, Brian Mulroney made the mistake of creating a crisis atmosphere, complete with non-stop bargaining sessions and high-level pressure tactics.

While those tactics may be common in labour negotiations, they are risky way to deal with a constitutional crisis—especially when they fail.

Once Meech fell apart, it became apparent that a constitutional Pandora's box had been opened, and putting the problem back in the box wasn't going to be easy. The so-called Canada Round involved numerous public consultations, and the scope of the Charlottetown accord was expanded to include a new senate, native self-government, economic union, etc., as well as Quebec. And still, many special interest and lobby groups are complaining that they were excluded from this agreement.

Logically, if *this* deal collapses the way Meech did, not only will we be looking at the all-but-certain separation of Quebec, but we'll have to *expand* the process next time to include the rest of the groups excluded this time. The process will be bigger, consensus will be that much more difficult to reach, negotiations will take place under extreme economic and social pressures, and it will drag on and on and on. And even worse

continued on page 15



## Mount Everest becoming towering garbage dump

*Everest n. Mount, a mountain in S Asia, on the boundary between Nepal and Tibet; the highest mountain in the world.*

—Webster's College Dictionary

It stands a towering five and a half miles above sea level, the highest gable on the rooftop of the world. It's been the subject of poems, ballads, books and films. Humans have died by the scores trying to climb its flanks. Adjectives like "spectacular" "awesome" and "magnificent" seem puny and pathetic in the presence of its sheet, mind-unhinging majesty. It's been called the most beautiful sight on the planet and the Eighth Wonder of the world.

It is also a dump.

Specifically, a garbage dump. One created by wealthy, arrogant, supposedly wilderness-loving humans who should know better.

Chris Bonnington is a member of that extremely elite group of mountaineers who can claim they've climbed Everest and lived to tell about it. His summation?

"Everest is the highest junkyard in the world. It is littered with discarded tins, tents, food and empty oxygen tanks. There's so much up there that a full-scale expedition would be needed to remove it."

To a non-mountaineer it seems incredible, but the fact is thousands of mountaineers from around the world converge on the slopes of Everest every year to try their luck. It costs may thousands of dollars even to fail to climb the mountain, so the people who come are most often rich. The kind of folks who are used to having "other people" take care of their garbage.

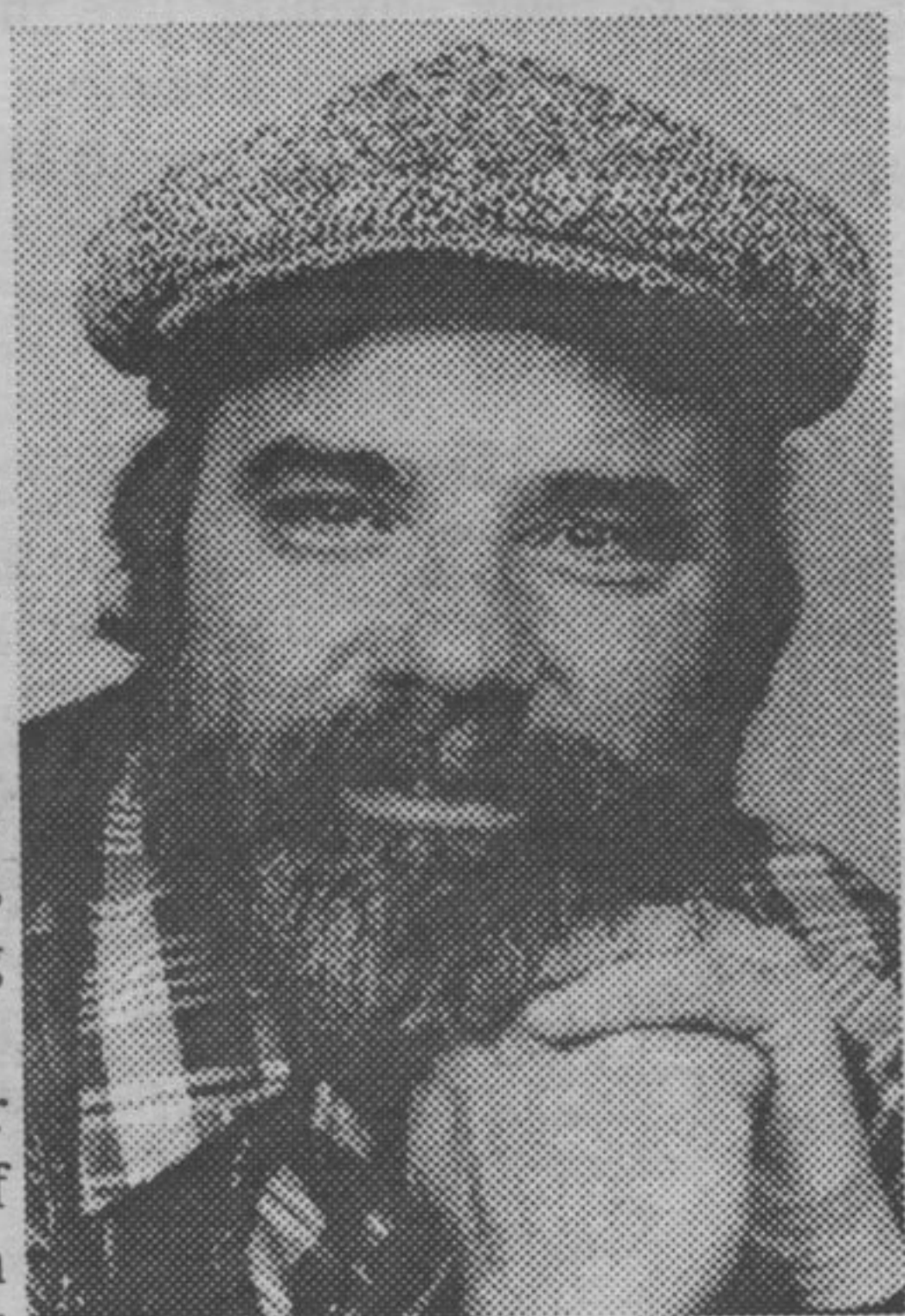
There are no garbage trucks or blue boxes in the Himalayas, so the trash gets left behind at the campsites or tossed into ravines.

Fortunately, not every visitor to Everest is a pig. There's a group called Youth To Everest, made up of Canadian and New Zealand volunteers, who ponied up more than \$4,000 apiece for the privilege of flying to the slopes of Everest and cleaning up the junk.

It's not a Club Med vacation. The volunteers endured six hour hikes and debilitating bouts of altitude sickness. Even halfway up Everest a human has to drink four litres of water a day to avoid dehydration. And it's exhausting. "at 15,000 feet" says volunteer Dawn Sinko, "even turning the pages of a book can be exhausting."

Aromatic, too. One of the culture shocks they had to get used to was going without hot baths for months at a time. The only way to heat water is by burning wood. And the forests are almost gone.

The volunteers stuck it out, to the admiration of the Nepalese who have had to live in the rich people's litter. They remember the days when there were no Yuppy trekkers on Everest. Dawn Sinko says "you'd ask them what it was like before the tourists came and they'd get really sad and say: 'oh, it was wonderful.'"



Arthur Black

Maybe it will be again.

Meanwhile, I notice from my local paper that a bunch of volunteers spent last weekend cleaning up a river right here in Canada. The Speed River is a tiny stream that will never be mistaken for the Amazon or the St. Lawrence. Truth to tell, you can walk across it in rubber boots and not get wet most of the time.

Nevertheless, a group called Friends of the Speed managed to fill six dumpsters and 700 garbage bags, and to fish out more than 150 rubber tires.

What's heartening is that it wasn't just a bunch of dewy-eyed eco-freaks who pitched in. The dumpsters were donated by a waste disposal firm which also hauled them to a landfill site. The municipality waived the usual \$90-per-tonne dumping fee. A local plant allowed organizers to pick up the discarded tires.

You know, sometimes it seems as if we might just get our act together yet.

The Nipigon-Red Rock Gazette and the Terrace Bay-Schreiber News are members of Laurentian Newspapers Limited 158 Elgin Street, Sudbury, Ontario P7E 3N5 (705) 673-5667  
John Thompson, Vice President



Members of the Canadian Community Newspapers Association and the Ontario Community Newspapers Association

<b>EDITORS</b> Cindy Laundry Darren MacDonald	<b>ADVERTISING</b> Ad. Manager Linda Harbinson Ad. Consultant Cheryl Kostecki	<b>PRODUCTION &amp; Quality Control</b> Supervisor Heather Michon
<b>OFFICE / ADMIN. &amp; Circulation</b> Clara Dupuis	<b>PUBLISHER...A. Sandy Harbinson</b>	

Local offices are located at 145 Railway Street, Nipigon, Ontario P0T 2J0 (807) 887-3583 fax 887-3720 and Highway 17 & Mill Road, Terrace Bay, Ontario P0T 2W0 (807) 825-3747 fax 825-9233  
2nd. class mailing permit 0867

One year subscriptions are available by contacting your local newspaper at one of the addresses listed above. Rates are:- Local seniors \$12 Other local \$18 Outside 40 mile radius \$29 USA \$38. GST must be added to all subscription purchases.