

# Opinion

## Approach to 21st century offers chance to heal

The few years left which lead to the 21st century may bring some of society's disenfranchised into the mainstream.

A look behind some of this country's current controversies reveals this trend. And of course, there is the possibility that we will fail to choose this holistic course of action.

Our First Nations people and a Royal Commission strongly recommend major spending and changes to bring about self government and enhance economic independence.

Many of those who have



### Viewpoint

Jo Ann Stevenson

followed Indian affairs have long agreed that The Indian Act is a patronizing and degrading piece of legislation that perpetuates poverty.

There is a strong will on the part of Canadians to respect and honor native people, to understand their

philosophy and wisdom and to heal this segregation.

We are quick to respond to such injustices in other countries and many feel the time is ripe for self healing at home.

As well, the issue of private education addresses the issue of main culture advantage. Jewish and private Christian groups have long sought for equal access to taxes. They would choose to educate their children their own way.

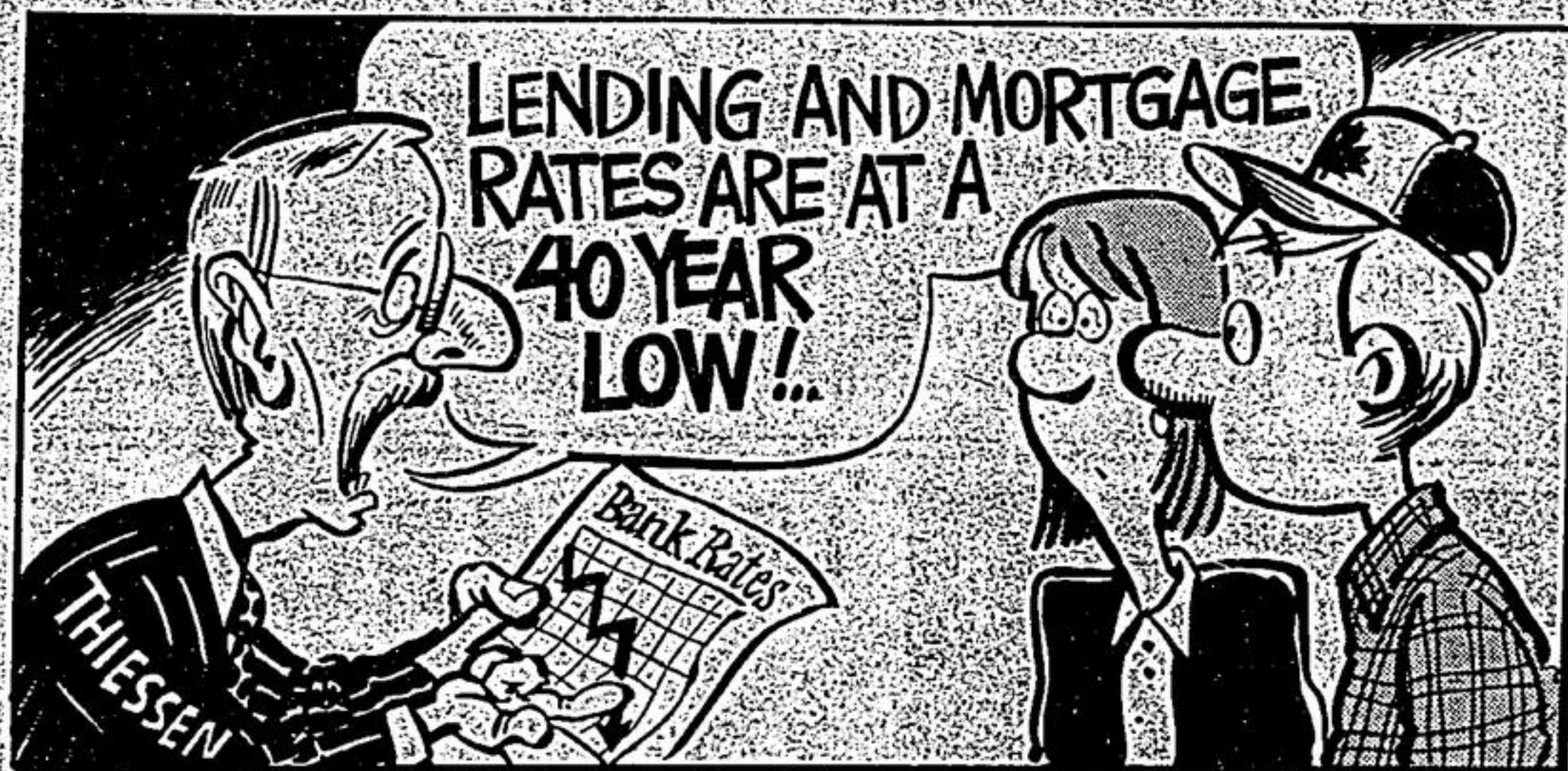
Many complain that the public school system bends backwards to de-emphasize the mainline Christian religion as is noted with the marginalizing of Christmas traditions in the schools.

yet others find the public schools not generic enough.

The public system is not intended to be the Protestant version of Catholic schools, (except in Quebec) but a secular system in which students from all faiths learn. Religious training is the responsibility of the parents and done outside of school hours.

But the demand for private religious schools indicates this system is neither fish nor fowl. Groups including mainline Christian ones are feeling disenfranchised.

These times are bringing such wounds to the surface. That in itself is a welcome opportunity for dialogue and understanding.



## A 'golden' touch with cars

I just had my car put down and I am deeply bummed out about it.

Not because I miss the car. It was a treacherous piece of Detroit technology that I should have pushed off a cliff several thousand dollars ago.

I'm delighted to be rid of that old clunker. What bums me out is that I have to buy another car soon.

And I am not good at purchasing automobiles.

When it comes to buying cars I have the reverse of the Midas Touch. Everything I put an ignition key in turns to yellow alright — but yellow as in 'lemon', not gold.

My first car was an Austin something. I paid \$25 for it and I was overcharged. The only

mileage I put on that car came from a tow truck that hauled it from the vendor's driveway to mine. "Just needs a little engine work" the grinning ex-owner assured me.

Right. Like John Wayne Bobbit just needed a Band-Aid. That car was cooked. Whacked. Ready for the Big Parking Lot In The Sky. Which is where it ended up without once conveying me so much as around the block.

Displaying the innate ability to learn from my mistakes that has endeared me to a succession of wives, I swiftly went out and bought another English car — a Morris Minor.

The Morris ran like a top. As long as the sun shone. At the first drop of rain, my Morris would splutter, cough asthmatically and figuratively go tires up on the pavement. A daisy chain of mechanics could find nothing wrong.

How a rain-sodden country like England could produce a car that refused to run in the rain is a mystery. Perhaps it was a Limited Edition Limited to me.

I worked my way through a succession of clunkers after that — a Ford station wagon that dropped its transmission on the road one day, then ran over it, snapping the rear axle in the process.

A manic-depressive Meteor, a schizophrenic Studebaker — if there was a dysfunctional vehicle on the used car lot, chances were pretty good I'd find it. And buy it.

I was stupid, but I wasn't crazy. I always knew enough to steer clear of cars from behind the Iron Curtain. I never, ever bought a Lada. Or a Yugo. Or a Ziguli.

And I most especially never bought a Moskovich.

In the '80s and early '90s more



### Basic Black

Arthur Black

than a hundred thousand Moskoviches rolled off the Moscow assembly line. For a lot of them, that was the last rolling they ever did. The Moskovich — a stubby hatchback that looked vaguely like a baffed-out Pinto — had two positive features. It was cheap and it was roomy.

How bad was the Moskovich? Ask Alexei Kuznetsov. Mister Kuznetsov is a fairly typical Moskovich owner. He's a Moscow businessman, 25 years old, married with three kids. He bought his Moskovich brand new in 1992 for about \$3,400. "It looked nice. It ran nice," says Kuznetsov, "—for the first 700 kilometres."

Then things started to go very, very wrong for the Kuznetsov Moskovich. He replaced the ignition, the generator, the starter, the entire electrical system, the clutch and the gear box. He also replaced the gas gauge three times and the shock absorbers four times.

When the repair bills passed the \$8,000 mark, Alexei Kuznetsov threw in the babushka and sold his clunker at a hideous loss to some Russian even more desperate and naive than he.

Call me selfish, but I find it somehow heartening that there's somebody out there who has even worse luck buying cars than I do.

I know my next lemon won't have a plaque on the dashboard that says "Moskovich".

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