



LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE

High-priced help in government costs us dearly

by CHARLES B. LYNCH, Southam News

OTTAWA — Commons Speaker Jeanne Sauvé had trouble reading Governor General Ed Schreyer's signature on the government's main estimates, and she murmured a complaint about his handwriting.

Once the estimates were tabled, MPs had trouble understanding them, as usually happens in the Commons when boxcar figures are bandied about.

It was obvious that neither Tory Critic Walter Baker nor NDP critic Doug Angus had the faintest idea of what games the government was playing, though both were careful to congratulate Treasury Board President Don Johnston on the neatness of his presentation, and to thank him for the 12 volumes he tabled in the House, outweighing the bound copies of the Hansard debates for a full year.

If the MPs can't fathom the esti-

mates, what hope is there for the rest of us who put up the money?

We can reel back at the news that the cost of financing the public debt is up by 35.7 per cent, to \$16.7-billion, or two-and-a-half times as much as we are going to spend on national defence.

Even more alarming, though, is the fact that our parliamentary watchdogs have taken sedation in the form of massive pay increases that boost spending on the House of Commons and Senate 24 per cent.

The only person in the whole governing apparatus who hasn't been given a whopping raise is the Governor General himself, which perhaps explains why his hand shook when he was signing the estimates.

Schreyer's pay stays at \$49,000 a year, though the cost of maintaining his staff of 74 goes up to \$3,050,000,

with an additional \$1,101,000 for the 21 people who run the honours secretariat at Government House.

Members of Parliament and Senators fare far better, the Senators and their 382 helpers drawing \$2,400,000, and the MPs and their 3,076 staff members pulling down \$140,600,000.

The estimates carefully conceal most of the high paycheques in the public service, lumping the big ones with the small.

We are told that most members of the cabinet have cleared the \$100,000-a-year hurdle with something to spare, taking into account their tax-free allowances.

And the prime minister hauls down \$117,000, or more than that if the tax-free portions are factored in.

The basic hunk for MPs is \$65,000, which is enough to make them comfy, and at least able to comprehend that it

costs money to run a government.

The man who watches the watchdogs, Auditor General Kenneth M. Dye, gets a raise from \$62,000 to \$87,000, which isn't out of line with what has happened to senior officials behind the secrecy curtain.

Chief Electoral Officer J.M. Hamel goes to \$75,000 from \$57,000, and the Commissioner of Official Languages, Max Yalden, soars to \$95,000 from \$70,000.

There are "allowances in lieu of residences" for the speakers of the Senate and the House of Commons, and an increase in Senate payroll of seven per cent "to provide operational support staff for enlarged accommodation." Alas, it seems, for Senate reform!

The prime minister's backup team, the people who run the country, stands at 525 people, but his budget

drops from \$32-million to \$30-million, which looks salutary until you read the fine print and discover that a savings of \$7 million is being made because three royal commissions have finished their probes into newspapers, the RCMP and the foreign service.

Back to payrolls for a moment, there is a page in the estimates that tells us that in the "management" category the salary range runs from \$43,300 a year to \$72,300, and that government lawyers can go to \$72,000 while government doctors can only reach \$70,000.

One neat thing about the big book of estimates is that it gives us a capsule summary of the objectives of each segment of government.

Thus we are told that the objective of the Senate is "to enable the Senate to carry out its constitutional role,"

while the Commons exists "to assist members in their consideration, in both official languages, of legislation and of the spending estimates."

The Privy Council "provides for the operation and support of the central decision-making mechanism of the government."

The administrative policy of Treasury Board, Johnston's own department, is stated to be "to develop and ensure the application of administrative policies including regulations, guidelines and systems in order to ensure probity and prudence in the choice and purchase of administrative inputs required to carry out programs effectively and to administer the Incentive Award Plan."

You can buy the big blue book for \$15, up five bucks from last year, a 50 per cent price hike. Call the cops!

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Fueling the fire

Critics of the adoption of the metric system in Canada have finally received what they have so badly needed to focus public attention on their cause.

They have a martyr.

Neil Fraser, an employee of Revenue Canada, has been dismissed for his active involvement in a campaign against the metric system. Fraser had been suspended twice in recent months for his public criticism.

Fraser's firing — for criticizing the actions of a department other than the one employing him — has escalated the battle into a new arena.

At stake is the motherhood issue, freedom of speech.

It's one thing for the federal government to shove the metric system down our throats without discussion, opponents say, but quite another to try to place a muzzle on critics of the government's actions.

Canadians have been grumbling off and on for more than two years about the high-handed imposition of the metric system. With each step toward total metrication the groans rise by a few decibels for a week or two, then fall.

We're an apathetic people.

Those who oppose the metric system have had two years to garner popular support to turn the clock back to Imperial measure.

They've failed so far.

Fraser's firing — which will be fought by the public service unions — may serve to precipitate an 11th-hour stand against total conversion to metrics.

Unfortunately, such action at this stage would likely be futile, and would certainly be counterproductive.

Backtracking to Imperial measure on the eve of total adoption of metrics would throw industry and the education system into chaos.

It's too late to turn back.

It's an ill wind

Enough is enough.

Even the most ardent skier, snowmobiler and other outdoor types who enjoy snow, must concede that we don't have to suffocate in the darn stuff.

And people who are wont to gripe about the city not keeping on top of snow removal best pause a minute and contemplate the cost — almost \$2 million for the first six weeks of the year — and who pays for it. They do.

It's as if nature were making us

pay for those last few snowless winters, but with a vengeance.

The only compensating element for the discomfort it causes, is that the record snowfall has provided an economic windfall for equipment operators at a time of financial stress for many of them. It's also been a bonanza for the young and not-so-young who have earned needed dollars shovelling off roofs and driveways.

Well, it's an ill wind that doesn't blow some good. But we say it begrudgingly.

Less jingle?

Medicine Hat News

Does money burn a hole in your pockets?

Well, in Britain, citizens have been complaining for years about the weight of British coins and the holes they are wearing in their pockets.

Finally, the British mint has decided to do something about the problem: For the first time in 15 years, it is minting two new coins. One is a seven-sided silver 20-pence worth about 44 cents. The other is a round one-pound coin worth about \$2.20 Canadian.

Even though there are already some complaints that the coins are "disconcer-

tly tiny", the British are well aware that money is shrinking everywhere else in the world.

This news is good news for most Brits who can now carry as much as 10 pounds in their pockets without so much as a single hole appearing. However it is bad news for others who may be forced to look elsewhere for gainful employment.

Hit hardest will be those in the pocket-reinforcing industry, not to mention those who have for years made their living picking up the trail of coins left by businessmen on their way to afternoon tea at the tailors.



Has time come to ban public-sector strikes?

by PETER COWAN, Southam News

EDMONTON — Strikes by Alberta nurses and Edmonton transit drivers have raised the question of how much the public should suffer when public sector collective bargaining breaks down.

The transit drivers, striking over pay and a city proposal to use part-time drivers, have created obvious difficulties for Edmontonians who depend on them to get to work.

The 7,300 members of the United Nurses of Alberta have struck 62 of the province's more than 100 hospitals, seriously limiting services. In the past, they have struck for deserved pay raises with a degree of public support.

But this time they are striking for more weekends off and more advance notice of shift schedules. Money is not an issue.

As a result, emergency services are limited, elective surgery has been delayed and, in the last few days, four sick babies were flown from Edmonton's Royal Alexandra Hospital to Saskatoon, where their proper care can be assured.

Six more babies may be moved and other hospitals are contemplating similar action.

The UNA has been staffing for neonatal units. But the Royal Alexandra decided to move the babies when it became

worried the nurses might withdraw services.

UNA executive director Simon Renouf described the airlift as "a big publicity stunt" and "an incredible and cynical manipulation of public sympathies."

He said the volunteer nurses were being worked to exhaustion while supervisory personnel took time off.

Dr. Neil Finer, head of the neo-natal unit, said moving the babies was dangerous but necessary.

But beyond the charges and counter-charges there is the issue of how far the right to strike should prevail for public sector employees.

It was originally the ultimate weapon for private sector unions, a test of strength between workers and management.

The right to strike in the public sector did not gain ground until the 1960s. Governments anticipated unions would use it sparingly.

In Quebec, where the militancy of public sector unions borders on the monstrous, politicians originally felt that by giving the right to strike and centralizing negotiations for the whole public sector, a civilized bargaining system would evolve.

Finance Minister Jacques Parizeau, who, as a civil servant helped create the system, discovered that no matter how close settlement might appear, the unions would begin an all-embracing public sector strike in every round of negotiations. All workers would go out, including teachers and hospital workers. Essential

services in hospitals were rarely assured.

Union power stemmed from their capacity to hurt the public. When government felt the pressure, it cracked down. But back-to-work laws, fines and some jail terms for defiance were usually a much better deal for public sector workers than for their private sector counterparts.

Quebec is an extreme example. But it proves that public sector strikes do not hurt public sector management. They hurt people and it is only when people are angry enough that governments act.

In Alberta, hospital administrators negotiate settlements within financial limits set by the province. There are no profits to be lost. Their jobs and careers are not jeopardized by the state of labor relations. Only the public suffers. The forces in play and the stakes are very different from those in the private sector.

Hospital strikes pose potential risk to health and life. Teacher strikes exact a human toll. Even postal strikes have bankrupted small businesses and cost people jobs.

Perhaps Edmonton's bus strike can be tolerated. But Alberta's massive nurses' strike shows just how far the right to strike in the public sector has gone in Canada.

The Alberta conflicts suggest that it is time Canadian governments re-examine public sector collective bargaining with a view to outlawing strikes where public interest can't be subordinated safely to the right to strike.

Beggars, unite!

Montreal Gazette

Since beggars, like many others, feel they should get a better deal, it is only logical they should do what many others do and form an organization. So they have. The Beggars Foundation, set up in India, is urging beggars of the world to unite for beggars' rights.

"This is a professions like any other profession and also as old," a federation official said. With one well-known exception, he probably is right about the age. Beggars have been around at least as long as lawyers and chiropractors and, for all we know, are as honest. A little white lie occasionally, but all of us are guilty of that.

Beggars offer a valuable service too,

confering on swells who part with their dimes a sense of self-worth and beneficence that cannot be matched for less than \$10 at a standard charity. Which is more, as the late Barbara Ward might have noted, than can be said for speculators.

Fortunately for the federation, a few of the luck or skillful among them make it out of destitution. When Eddie the Monk died two years ago in Florida after a lifetime of investing his surplus take, he left an estate of nearly \$700,000.

Among the federation's goals is the allocation of territories. What will the federation do about someone trying to muscle in on a profitable spot? Probably it will have to send him begging.

Smoker fumes

Re: Dreary Anti-smoking Campaign.

May I remind all the ardent anti-smokers objecting to the side-smoke from cigarettes which may or may not in some future date cause them cancer which may or may not kill them, that the exhaust from just one of the cars they drive would definitely kill me (or anyone) in a matter of minutes.

I'll take them seriously when they GET serious.

— Laurie Burwell

Who's clipping?

During the last B.C. Telephone labor-management dispute, many cable slashings were reported by the news media.

At that time it was reported that cable

slashing was not particular to the strike, but was an on-going occurrence throughout the year.

My questions are as follows:

a) How do the number of cable slashings per week since that time compare with the number of cable slashings during the labor-management dispute?

b) Why is it that this type of incident has not been given the same attention by the news media since that time?

c) Could it be that the news media, by their actions, merely "heaped coals on the fires" during the dispute when a little more understanding and consideration for the parties involved might have made their task easier?

d) If the number of cable slashings is appreciably reduced when B.C. Tel labor and management are at work, I wonder who is responsible for these malicious

acts when some of the parties are not at work?

— H. J. Lenaghan,
The customer ...
(who pays the shot)

Please write

The Citizen invites readers to express their views on topics of public interest. However, unless there are good reasons for anonymity, letters to the editor will be published only if signed by the writer. Address and telephone number of the writer must also be included so that authenticity of the letter can be checked.

Letters must be free of libel, personal abuse or other impropriety.

They should be no more than 300 words in length and may be edited for space and other reasons. Typed letters should be double spaced.

Art Buchwald

The hardest thing for the Reagan administration to find is a "qualified" black person to appoint to an important position in the government. By "qualified," we mean somebody who is against busing, job-training programs, welfare, food stamps, government-subsidized housing, as well as equal-opportunity litigation.

But when the administration finds a black who's willing to buy the whole conservative package, he's welcomed into the government with open arms.

I don't want to brag, but I know one, and if all goes well he could become a rising star in the Republican Party.

His name is Thomas Jefferson III, and I ran into him in Brooks Brothers where he was being fitted for a suit.

"How goes the civil rights battle?" I asked.

"I'm not into civil rights any more," Thomas told me. "Here's my new business." He handed me a card.

It read, "Thomas Jefferson III, Chairman, Black Citizens for the B-1 Bomber."

"That's a heavy title," I said. "What do you do?"

"Anything they ask me to."

"Who do you mean by they?"

"The Republican Party."

"I thought you were a Democrat."

"I used to be until I decided there was no future in it. There are too many blacks in the Democratic Party, and there's no opportunity there. But if you're a black Republican you can write your own ticket. There are so few of us that when they find one, they can't do enough for you."

"Such as?"

"Well I'm particularly in demand for Republican fund raisers. Not only don't I have to pay \$1,000 for dinner, but they always sit me on the dais. When I was a Democrat, I was lucky to get a seat near the kitchen door. You know when they introduce the head table and the Master of Ceremonies asks everyone to hold their applause? Well when they introduce me the audience can't contain themselves, and they start clapping right away. I get standing ovations for just taking a bow."

"That must be a great ego trip."

"You can't imagine how many people want to take me to lunch at the Metropolitan and University Clubs. I turn down nine invitations for every one I accept. All my host has to say is 'This is Thomas Jefferson III — he's black,' and you'd think I was Robert Redford. I even get to play golf at the best country clubs. When I was a Democrat I had to wait hours to tee off at a public course."

"I can see you in demand as a guest," I said. "But how do you make a living?"

"Speaking at business meetings. You can't imagine how many corporations are desperate for a black speaker to fill out their program."

"What do you tell them?"

"The same old thing the white speakers do. I attack big government, welfare cheats, social programs, and regulations that are stifling business. The only difference is when a black person says it they like it twice as much."

"When I was a Democrat, nobody asked me to speak. They were looking for a Jesse Jackson, or an Andy Young, or a Julian Bond or a Benjamin Hooks, and the Democrats always expected them to speak for nothing. But Republicans know if they want a black speaker they have to pay for him."

"You're on to something, Tom," I said in admiration. "You found out, as a black, where the money is."

"I'm just killing time until I get the right government appointment. They're going to have to come to me soon because they've used up every black conservative they've got."

"I wonder why more blacks don't try to get on the Republican gravy train?"

"I hope they don't. If too many blacks join the party, the novelty will wear off and the Republicans won't treat us any better than the Democrats."

Bon Wicks



"He's been laid off. Can I help you?"