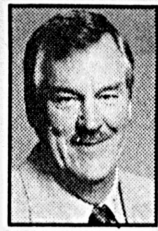


OPINION

BILL PETERSON,
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EDITORIALS

Still looking for answer

The decision by the Canadian Medical Association not to buy into doctor-assisted suicide unfortunately does little to bring the issue closer to resolution.

At its meeting in Montreal this week, the association voted 93-74 to exclude euthanasia and assisted suicide from the services doctors perform. There had been pressure within the association to leave such decisions up to individual doctors.

The closeness of the vote (240 other delegates didn't vote at all) indicates the lack of consensus within the medical community on one of the most controversial issues in the country.

The result does, however, leave the federal government without the blessing it would undoubtedly love to have had for a free vote in the Commons.

Following the suicide of ALS victim Sue Rodriguez last February, Prime Minister Jean Chretien promised a free vote after a review of Senate committee recommendations.

The CMA debate brings us no nearer to closure. We now have a medical community that is deeply divided on the issue but with a growing faction demanding freedom of choice for doctors. At the same time, the country's legislators continue to struggle with it and are highly unlikely to reach any consensus of their own.

When the Senate committee brings in its recommendations this fall the question will once again be put to the top of the national agenda, and will remain in contention well into next year until and if the Commons vote is held.

Even then, the parliamentary debate could be protracted depending on what form it takes — a simple resolution or a plethora of policy options.

A year after Rodriguez' death focused national attention on assisted suicide and euthanasia, Canada is likely to still be looking for the answer.

Aw, rats!

Humanitarianism can be taken too far.

We're suckers for lost puppies and kitties, we feed the birds in winter, and some of us even move an intruding spider to the garden instead of squashing it.

But we find it difficult to have much sympathy for marauding rodents, and we're downright incredulous that a New Jersey man who whacked a garden-raiding rat with a broomhandle faces a charge of needlessly killing it.

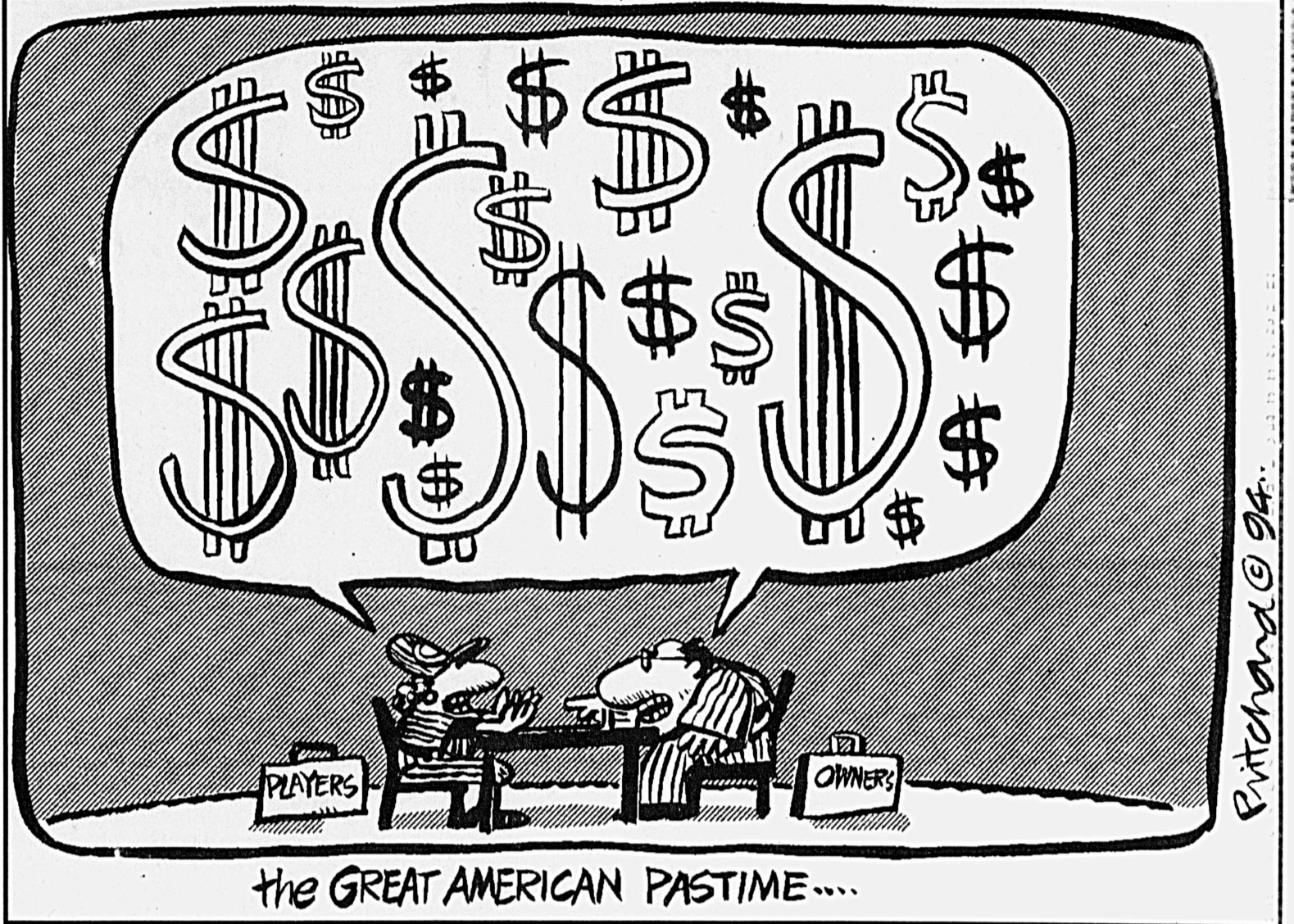
Frank Balun, 69, says he caught a rat that was eating his tomato plants, and called the Humane Society to remove it from his squirrel trap.

The rat tried to escape before help arrived, so he hit it.

The Associated Humane Societies slapped him with two summonses and he has to appear in court Aug. 24.

A Humane Societies worker says if Balun would have left it alone, the rat would have been "humanely put to sleep by injection" or "set free in a nature environment."

Whacking is cheaper.



LAND CLAIMS ANALYSIS

A major role for university

The University of Northern British Columbia not only became Canada's newest university Wednesday, but it began Day One of its long-dreamed-of mandate to become a self-governing, degree-granting institution in the North and for the North.

I especially like the term "self-governing," because in the context of Canadian universities that means autonomous from the government of the day, and in our particular circumstance, it should mean that the Harcourt cabinet will finally stop meddling in the management affairs at UNBC.

Historically, universities have been a refuge of academic freedom with the inherent and unconstrained right to examine the important questions of the day. I'm sure that will be the case at UNBC and I see our university as playing a solid leadership role in defining the many important issues that face northern British Columbians.

First, one of the most vexing problems challenging our province, and specifically confronting those of us who live anywhere outside of the Lower Mainland, is the resolution of native land claims.

It's also becoming alarmingly clear that the NDP government is

RIGHT SIDE UP

by Bruce Strachan



both politically bogged down and hopelessly outgunned in the settlement process. When asked about land claims, or any of the details surrounding the negotiation framework, the Harcourt government dives for cover and mumbles on about privileged information.

That's simply unacceptable. Negotiations as important as these have to be done in an atmosphere of sunshine and objective public scrutiny. And there is no better way to ensure an open process than to have the various faculties at UNBC provide that objective sunlight and thorough analysis.

If ever there was an issue that begged for an independent third party, such as UNBC, to examine a process that will affect forever the economic, cultural and social destiny of our province; that issue is native land claims.

The more that is known about the land claim process and expect-

ed settlements, the better it is for all parties. UNBC can provide that knowledge.

The second area where UNBC can take on its own leadership role is in regional economic development. To be sure, many agencies, such as local chambers of commerce and our own Prince George Region Development Corporation do a first-class job at the technical and grassroots level.

UNBC, though, is uniquely placed to provide an important academic dimension to regional economic development. Doing research on a fee-for-service basis is an obvious role for UNBC.

For example, the P.G. Region Development Corporation along with the District of Mackenzie will soon release a study on the Williston Lake water level problem. That's the type of research local governments and agencies could readily contract to UNBC.

There is a broader regional role for UNBC, though, and that is to get out and identify where it as a university can lead its constituent communities to constructive economic development.

Simon Fraser University is an innovative model to follow. Not content to watch the world go by from the top of Burnaby Mountain, SFU opened the successful Harbour Centre campus downtown on West Hastings.

SFU has scooped the business community right out from under the nose of UBC, but more importantly, provided the downtown community with first-class, innovative programs.

To be sure, the site on Cranbrook Hill is marvellous, and other campuses throughout the region will follow. But the real impact of a university is outside the classrooms.

The issues facing northern B.C. are limitless but the answers won't be found in textbooks. They'll be found by UNBC faculty, students and administration questioning, testing every assumption.

For UNBC, the sky is the limit. Use it all.

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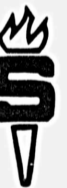
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150 Brunswick Street, Prince George, B.C. V2L 5K9 P.O. Box 5700. (604) 562-2441. A Southam Newspaper

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Games a gathering of family members

VICTORIA — In the interest of keeping traffic congestion to a minimum, I decided to leave the car at home on Monday and walk to work.

The press gallery is housed on the third floor of the Parliament Buildings, and escaping the legislative precinct by automobile at rush hour is a daunting task at the best of times, particularly at the height of the tourist season.

But with the Queen arriving by motorcade at the Parliament Buildings at 4 p.m., I knew the precinct would be a madhouse, reducing traffic to a snarl.

My hunch turned out to be right, and leaving the car at home also gave me an opportunity to nip over for a brew or two to the Union Club, that former bastion of male supremacy which only recently decided to get with it and allow women to be members. Stay with me. I promise this yarn is going somewhere.

After a couple of hours and half a dozen beer or so at the bar with four equally thirsty fellow club members, a new face joined our group. He turned out to be from New Zealand and was in Victoria for the Commonwealth Games.

In the course of the conversation, he wanted to know whether the people of Victoria had gotten behind the Games, caught the spirit, as the slogan goes.

My fellow club members thought they had, despite the eight years of bad-mouthing by the media. I thought it might be prudent for me to stay out of that argument, when our guest from New Zealand said he was one of them. One of whom? I asked. One of the bad-mouthing media types, he said.

It turned out he was in Victoria to cover the Games for a chain of New Zealand newspapers and was staying at the club.

I never asked him whether he caught the spirit, but hell, as a working

VICTORIA REPORT

by Hubert Beyer



reporter you don't sneeze at a job that lets you go half-way around the world to cover the Commonwealth Games.

As for badmouthing the Games, I've got to admit my friends were right. Ever since Victoria was chosen as the site for the 1994 Commonwealth Games, eight years ago, the local media have left no stone unturned to find things to criticize about the Games.

At one point, the negative coverage actually created the impression in other countries that Victoria wouldn't be able to deliver, resulting in offers to change the venue.

Call me naive, but I have supported the Commonwealth Games from day one. I happen to like the very concept of the Commonwealth, a family of nations bound together not by force, but by their own free will, and not so much by economic interest as by a common heritage — the British parliamentary system.

I see the Commonwealth Games as a gathering of family members, and like any host, I am proud to welcome our cousins from around the world. And I'm particularly happy that South Africa has rejoined the family after a long exile.

When I left the Union Club that afternoon, I arrived back at the Parliament Buildings just in time to see the matriarch of the

Commonwealth family arrive. More than 10,000 people crowded the lawn to catch a glimpse of the Queen.

I've covered many a royal visit, and the spectacle never ceases to impress me. Again, I don't share the views held by so many of my colleagues whose cynicism regarding such events is legendary.

The crowd was anything but cynical. They roared and cheered when the Queen passed by during her walkabout.

I'd also advise any cynic not to go near Charles Merritt and Ernest Smith. They are the last two surviving Canadians awarded the Victoria Cross during the Second World War. They met the Queen that afternoon, chatted with her, and were thrilled.

And then there were the scores of American tourists who just happened to be in town the day the Queen visited, and once again, their reaction confirmed my long-held suspicion that many Americans secretly wish they had a queen as head of state.

Tim Mazur of Louisiana had waited for three hours to see Queen Elizabeth. "I was real close and it was great.

Everyone needs to see a queen once in their life," he said.

Well, you blew your chance to have a queen when you had your revolution. We decided to wait a little longer, and in the end became just as free and independent as our former cousins in America, all without a revolution.

And as the Commonwealth Games are about to be officially opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I for one offer my thanks to all the volunteers, some of whom have worked hard for eight years to make these Games a success.

Don't ever let a cynical media deter you from your enthusiasm.