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The humblest Citizen of all the land, when clad in armour of a righteous cause,
is stronger than all the hosts of Error. - WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

Soaring deficits demonstrate need for tax reforms

PERHAPS IT WAS A STEP in the right direction when Ontario's finance minister admitted that he hasn't produced any plan to achieve a balanced budget in the near future, let alone in the two years remaining in the government's current mandate.

On the contrary, Dwight Duncan's shocking disclosure last Thursday that the 2009-10 provincial deficit will be \$24.7 billion was accompanied by predictions of further huge deficits, totalling more than \$40 billion, in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 fiscal years, when Canada's economy is expected to be relatively healthy.

The \$24.7 billion is roughly double the previous high deficit of \$12.4 billion racked up by the NDP government of the day in 1992, and more than \$10 billion above what Mr. Duncan predicted only last June.

However, it should be seen in the context of similarly huge deficits being racked up in Ottawa (\$56 billion) and by the Obama administration in Washington (which is said to be approaching \$1 trillion). And while Opposition Leader Tim Hudak slammed the McGuinty Liberals' financial record as "shameful" and predicted their only cure will be higher taxes and fees, neither he nor NDP Leader Andrea Horwath had much more to offer than criticism.

As matters stand, we now have a federal government that claims, incredibly, that it can balance its budget without increasing taxes or reducing services or transfers, and a provincial government which simply admits it doesn't know how to stem the flow of red ink.

In these circumstances, we think an appropriate course for both the federal Conservatives and provincial Liberals would be to at least try to de-politicize the issue by putting it to an all-party

committee that could invite public input on how best to achieve balanced federal and provincial budgets within five years.

As matters stand, the "solutions" likely to be proposed by the provincial Conservatives and NDP will be equally disparate and unsatisfactory. Those on the right side of the political spectrum will keep calling for tax cuts and smaller government while those to the left will demand higher taxation of corporations and wealthy individuals along with lower taxes and more services for the poor.

Clearly, the challenges facing both the Conservatives at Ottawa and the Liberals at Queen's Park are unprecedented, and far worse than those that faced the Chrétien Liberals and Harris Conservatives in 1995.

Although much of the credit for gradually balancing the federal budgets went to Paul Martin as Jean Chrétien's wily finance minister, the fact is that the feat was accomplished in large part because of cutbacks on federal transfers to the provinces and by the added revenue flowing into the federal treasury from the Goods and Services Tax the Liberals inherited from the Mulroney Conservatives.

Similarly, the Harris government arrived on the scene at Queen's Park just as Ontario was emerging from the recession of the early 1990s, did not have to cope with a floundering U.S. economy, and reduced the provincial deficits mainly by cutting services and/or downloading them to the municipalities.

It's debatable whether the provincial Conservatives under either Mike Harris or Ernie Eves ever really balanced their budgets, one of the "balances" having been achieved only by selling off a huge asset in the Highway

407 toll road. However, it's indisputable that Conservative tax cuts (by the Harper government federally and the Harris and Eves governments in Ontario) have made it far more difficult to achieve anything resembling a balanced budget at either level of government.

In the circumstances, the obvious need is for a means of obtaining sufficient revenue to pay for either the current level of services, or for a level of services closely tailored to residents' expectations, as soon as the economy is reasonably healthy, and budgetary surpluses during any future economic booms.

As we see it, such revenue levels are utterly unattainable in the absence of greater taxation in one form or another.

That's why we see the real need as for some form of tax reform.

In our view, the all-party committees we propose should have mandates requiring them to recommend changes in the existing system of taxes and user fees that would, in addition to balancing future budgets:

- base all tax rates on the individual's or corporation's ability to pay;
- eliminate tax "loopholes" wherever possible;
- tax all forms of real income, including any individual's lottery winnings above \$1,000;
- base all user fees on the actual cost of providing a licence or service;
- simplify the Income Tax Act and all other tax legislation and base income-tax liability on a household's overall income, and
- strike an appropriate balance between taxes on income and consumption.

Without a doubt, the challenge is a daunting one, yet one that surely must be met.

FEEL LUCKY?



Need for vaccinations is a no-brainer

IT WILL BE INTERESTING, indeed, to see whether the deaths of two otherwise healthy young children changes the minds of roughly half the polled Canadians who last week didn't plan to have their kids vaccinated against the H1N1 influenza virus.

Since the virus turned up only a little over a year ago, the vaccine is obviously new and was only recently tested as to its efficacy and potential riskiness.

But if nothing else, the deaths this week of a 13-year-old Etobicoke hockey player and a 10-year-old Cornwall girl ought to be compelling evidence that any risk posed by the vaccine is triv-

ial by comparison with the (admittedly small) risk of death from the virus.

Locally, the public vaccination clinics operated by the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph health unit will start tomorrow (Friday) in Guelph and on Monday in Orangeville, where the health unit office at 276A Broadway will have clinics Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Thursdays from 1 to 8 p.m. until Dec. 23.

Only two clinics are currently planned for Shelburne's Mel Lloyd Centre — on Tuesday, November 17 and Tuesday, December 15, both from 2 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

CITIZEN MAILBOX

Lack of self-propelled rail cars explained

Re: "Romance of the rails" still lives on (Oct. 15):

Both VIA Rail Canada and SNC Lavalin (who will build and operate the Pearson Airport Link) would love to use new, modern Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs), but there are a number of problems.

Most of these trains would run on CN lines and CN have a System Standard regarding light trains, in that a single vehicle is limited to 30 m.p.h. and a two-vehicle train is limited to 50 m.p.h., hardly speeds that would entice people away from their cars. The reasoning is that light trains do not necessarily shunt the rails properly and might not activate the signal systems and crossing warning systems. More about this later.

The other issue is the standards to which rail cars are built. The U.S. standard, as mandated by the Federal Railway Authority (FRA), specifies a very heavy and

robust vehicle, most likely because in the past passenger cars could be included in the consist of a freight train and would have to withstand those stresses. There is also a 'crashability' issue if the vehicle was to hit another train.

Currently no manufacturer makes a passenger vehicle to these standards. Colorado Railcar was attempting to but has gone bankrupt — their assets have been bought by US Railcar who hope to revive this effort.

You mention the old RDC or Budd Cars that used to run on many lines in Ontario (and do meet the FRA Specs) — there are approximately 50 of these vehicles left in North America in various states of repair. Since they do have stainless steel frames they can be retrofitted with new engines (Tier IV?) and put into service even though they are over 50 years old and weigh

about 70 tonnes.

Railways can run lighter vehicles but not where there is mixed freight and passenger service. For example, the O-Train in Ottawa which runs Bombardier Talent DMUs, but only allows freight traffic on the line at night when passenger service is not running.

In Europe, on the other hand, DMUs have become a standard for most back line operations. These new DMUs are made by all major manufacturers (Alstom, Bombardier and Siemens) and the new designs weigh about one half the weight of an old Budd Car (about 30 tonnes). They can operate at speeds up to 90 m.p.h. and would be a great addition to VIA's fleet. To ensure proper operation of the signal systems, all DMUs, in the U.K. and Ireland, are equipped with Track Circuit Assistors (TCAs) which induce an electrical current between

the wheels and rail to enhance electrical shunting. As regards crash standards, the DMUs are designed to deform in an accident and roll to the side away from the opposing obstruction and numerous tests have concluded that passenger safety is probably increased with this feature.

Applications have been made to Transport Canada for an exemption to allow European DMUs to run on freight lines in Canada, but to my knowledge this exemption has not been granted.

Another option would be to install TCAs on rebuilt Budd Cars and have CN allow higher speeds on their lines.

Hopefully in the near future passenger service can return to some of these smaller cities using new technologies that are available elsewhere in the world.

Bill Mountain
Orangeville

Column on celibacy, papal infallibility said fallacious

The column by Constance Scrafield-Danby, entitled "Time to admit fallibility", (Oct. 22) is, ironically, so wrong in so many ways that it cannot go unchallenged. Simply put, the article is poorly reasoned and factually incorrect.

While the author is entitled to her opinion she does enjoy a means of expressing that opinion in a way that can influence others. In light of that fact the errors and

weaknesses contained in that article must be exposed.

Let me state clearly that I am not defending, in any way, the Bishop in question. I am upset and sickened by what this man did. However others, such as the author in question, are using this situation to espouse their own views in a way that is neither logical nor accurate. Nor am I defending celibacy here. A far better job of that was done by Fr. Raymond

D'Souza in a National Post article, "Why Priests don't have kids," published Aug. 27, 2009.

The article itself is a poorly constructed "strawman" argument. The author has presented the issue of celibacy in such a way so as to render it easy to take apart and show how her opinion is correct. To accomplish this she presents information that is either inaccurate or incomplete.

The real issue underlying this matter is the pursuit of an opportunity to attract YMCA programs and services to a region comprising the six municipalities that requested the evaluation process. We believe that the achievement of this goal would be an asset to area families and to the community.

Michael Daniher
via email

Then, having obtained the reader's confidence in her reasoning, she proceeds to criticize what she's really after: the Papal position against the use of condoms in fighting HIV/AIDS. I will also show that her position is incorrect, but let us return to the first half of the article which deals with celibacy.

Along with constructing a straw man argument the author also incorrectly argues from the particular to the universal. In short, she argues that since some priests have problems with celibacy, all priests have problems with celibacy, and thus celibacy should be abandoned. That is equivalent to saying that since some parents abuse their children all parents abuse their children, and thus we should abandon parenthood. The fallacy should be obvious.

Furthermore, the author refers to a priest quoted by CBC Radio One who calls celibacy an "unnatural life the Church imposes upon its priests..." This is a contradiction. A discipline freely chosen cannot be one that is imposed. No one forces someone to become a priest,

• Please turn to page A4

Bidding adieu to Garth Turner

One thing can be said about our dearly departed, wannabe Liberal MP Garth Turner. He certainly has a flourish for the grand exit.

Mr. Turner recently withdrew his candidacy to be the federal Liberal candidate in Dufferin-Caledon, apparently upset that the party didn't call a nomination meeting in the summer when he was the lone man in the race.

In his blog, The Greater Fool, he wrote: "My reason was simple, and I stated it truthfully: an unexplained refusal by the federal Libs to allow me to become the candidate, by preventing a local nomination meeting, sent a clear message. Get lost."

"I presumed this was because of my policy views, at odds with the leader over things like the HST and the need to be honest about rising taxes and falling spending. I knew this would end in a mess, or an embarrassment, and probably both. So, I walked."

First of all, for the uninitiated, let us explain how the nominations process works. A prospect in the Dufferin-Caledon riding files his papers, (submits his application), to the Liberal Party of Canada Ontario (LPCO).

The LPCO decides whether the applicant meets the basic criteria for nomination. If all is kosher, he is "green lit" to seek the nomination. The deadline for applying for the nomination is the riding association's nomination meeting which, incidentally, is scheduled by the LPCO.

This is where the Turner camp cried foul.

The LPCO said that, before it would call a nomination meeting, the riding association would need enough members to equal two per cent of the total vote the candidate garnered in the last election. That meant 170 memberships would be needed and the Dufferin Caledon Federal Liberal Association had 161.

The Turner associates pointed out that only 1.5 per cent was necessary and that the threshold of 127 members was already surpassed.

While the wording of the LPCO's nomination rules appears ambiguous, the body does make it rather clear that the scheduling of a nomination meeting is up to the LPCO's discretion.

"Even a threshold of two per cent is a very low target," explained LPCO executive director Judi Longfield in a correspondence to the Dufferin Caledon Federal Liberal Association (DCFLA), "and would not necessarily guarantee a nomination date; particularly given that there has been no effort on the part of the green light candidate to build a membership base."

In his blog, Mr. Turner pointed out that his lack of official candidate status "made it impossible to either campaign or effectively raise funds in an unwinnable Conservative bastion."

"Meanwhile, since I was the only nominee, there was no further need to rope new people into memberships for a vote which would not occur."

Rope new people into memberships? Hardly an endorsement of the party or the riding association, I must say. As for the impossibility of effecting raising funds, how come nomination candidate Bill Prout was able, even before he was green-

lit, to pedal close to 40 memberships in less than a week?

It also raises doubts as to how Garth Turner was going to sell the Liberal party in a Tory stronghold, when he didn't have the wherewithal to sell 20 or so \$10 party memberships and make the membership threshold argument moot.

Mr. Turner's statements raise suspicions that he wasn't seeking a nomination in Dufferin-Caledon. It looks like he really wanted a coronation.

In a press release, he lambasted DCFLA president Jeff May and membership chair Janet Rosenstock for their supposed role in torpedoing his messianic mission to lead the local Liberals out of the political wilderness.

"It's become clear that local Liberal executives Janet Rosenstock, Jeff May and others at LPCO have tried hard in the media and with Conservative bloggers to 'prove' I resigned because I was afraid to face another unknown candidate," he wrote, "or since we failed to sign up required new members. As you know, these things are untrue."

The attack on Mr. May was unfair. Whether he liked Mr. Turner or not, Mr. May was fulfilling his role as riding association president and relaying the directives of the national party executive.

As for Ms. Rosenstock — whom Mr. Turner publicly referred to as a "quixotic and combative octogenarian romance author" — she liked Mr. Turner not one bit and let her feelings out for all to see.

In fact, she has since resigned her membership chair position to help Mr. Prout's nomination bid.

If one is upset at the image of Mr. Turner tearing into an elderly woman, one need not worry. Janet Rosenstock is one tough cookie who, with her self-deprecating wit, refers to herself as "the Liberal Crone." (By the way, since she's still in her 70s she isn't an octogenarian.)

An American who moved to Canada over 40 years ago, Ms. Rosenstock has been in the political wringer since her teens. At 16, in California, she worked on the senate campaign of Helen Gahagen Douglas against one of the most ruthless politicians in modern history, a guy named Richard Nixon. She also squared off against the segregationists during the civil rights era.

Somehow, I can't see her being fazed by anything that Garth Turner has to say.

What this whole episode boils down to is that Mr. Turner was never told by the Liberals that he couldn't be the nominee. With the call for more membership activity and the introduction of Bill Prout into the race, they implied that he would have to work for it.

Instead, he left with the parting remark: "I truly hope our little adventure will help remind our party of a principle called democracy."

Gee, and here I was thinking that the right to both disagree and choose was what democracy was all about.

