

Ola October 15th!! Guess who is @ 28 hours late and counting with a due article. Without the usual fanfare, here it comes...

A Sign of...

Things to come?? The federal government announced its Throne Speech (this is where the government sets out its legislative objectives for the coming session) last week. They spewed out the usual mumbo jumbo of tax cuts, debt reduction, and improvements to our social system as well as several other popular clauses (or at least what polling says is popular). I will spare you the boring details. The event here is not as important as the reaction and it is interesting to note. In Nova Scotia, the embattled Tories have taken over a mess which I have described before. The numbers are even worse than I predicted. The province is about to hit the debt wall (see Saskatchewan in the early 1990's). What is the debt wall?? Basically it is when the big money lenders downgrade your debt to the point where nobody except for your local loan shark will lend you money. The provincial deficit is almost \$500 million and the provincial

debt is \$10 billion (every person in the province owes just over \$10000-highest among Canadian provinces). With Ottawa announcing impending tax cuts, the NS Tories proved that they can either read or are just the first ones to understand the magnitude of this simple statement. Why?? Provincial tax rates are linked to your Federal

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tax rates (unless you live in Quebec which has its own tax return). If the federal tax rate is reduced then the provincial revenues will be reduced as well. Credit Premier John Hamm (incidentally, am I the only one who thinks of Mr.Hand, from Fast Times at Ridgemont High, every time I hear his name??) for recognizing this in a hurry. But his solution is alarming (or at least to me it is). He is proposing establishing, like Quebec, his own tax returns. Why?? To make sure their government can bring in the revenues they need. I think this sucks and here is why. When federal taxes were going up, I did not see any provinces step in to offer their own system so as to reduce the tax burden on Joe Canada. Yet when their revenues are threatened, they are ready to

jump in both feet first to make sure whatever tax savings are produced by one level of gov't is eaten up by the other. Not to mention the duplication it will create as well as complicating things even further. If I was a Nova Scotian, this is one battle I would fight...

Humorous note out of...

Mont Tremblant. Apparently American President Bill Clinton gave the best speech on Federalism at the embattled conference last week. Its contents are not as important as it's formation. Apparently, Bill threw away his prepared text and delivered the speech off the cuff based on his knowledge of the problem. Why he threw the speech away I

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could speculate all day on and most probably couldn't be published anywhere but in magazines that are only available in plastic wrappings. The second humorous thing about it was that Bill seemed more pressed to get on with things because he was worried about

getting 18 holes (of golf that is) in before sunset. Say what you want about Bill. In one bold manoeuvre he has earned huge marks with this camper by stupefying separatist leaders (in their own house), having an impressive knowledge of Canadian affairs, and being able to prioritize the necessity of playing golf on the new, challenging Le Grande at Tremblant...

It will be our country's last grasp/gasp at democracy...

Everywhere you look...

And there is an election waiting to happen. Municipal ones, American ones, all kinds of them. But there is one which will give us (Canadians) a better idea of how we view our federal government. I am referring to four bye-elections to be held in mid November. It will be our countries last grasp/gasp at "democracy" before the turn of the millennium. I have used quotations for democracy because three of the bye elections are in what has become known as safe seats (translation- these seats are rarely lost by the Liberals). The first seat is in the Montreal riding of Mount Royal (Pierre Trudeau's former seat) where its present MP, the capable

Sheila Finestone has been promoted to the "\$greener\$" pastures of the Senate. This seat will remain Liberal by a substantial margin. The second seat is Hull/Aylmer which is populated/polluted with federal civil servants.

While not as solidly Grit as Mount Royal it is equally safe and will remain Liberal. This seat was held by the powerful Cabinet Minister Marcel Masse, who has taken a lucrative job in a crown corporation (federally owned company). A quick note on Masse is in order though. Masse was first elected in 1993. Federal MP's must sit for 6 years before they become eligible for the lucrative pot of gold known as a government pension. Masse was planning to hold on until he covered this threshold but when word leaked of this, he quickly resigned before the potential embarrassment of having to answer for himself in the House of Commons. The third seat is in York West (a riding in Toronto) where the Liberals won't give the opposition a second seat in Ontario. The seat is being vacated by Sergio Marchi. Sergio is taking a lucrative public position as well. But don't