

Brother, can you spare a billion?

Ask not what your country can do for you...

JUST ABOUT EVERYONE KNOWS the story of Robin Hood-- the legendary English heroic rogue who stole from the rich and gave the money to the poor. Errol Flynn's swashbuckling and Kevin Costner's accent-mangling portrayals aside, there's something more to the tale than archery and Hollywood heroics. It's a story with timeless appeal, and is perhaps more relevant to audiences today than it ever was, as citizenry in Canada and throughout the western world complain that they are being taxed within an inch of their lives. Who among us would not have cheered (or at least been hard-pressed to suppress a giggle) if some bow-wielding rapsallion had plundered Brian Mulroney's house of its more extravagant trappings and liquidated them, passing the profits on to homeless shelters or food banks? Certainly, it would be a violation of civil rights, but there would also be something poetically just about it. Alas, there's no real justification for some tights-clad vigilante plundering the nation's well-to-do, though-- that would be taking the law into one's own hands. That is the responsibility of our legal and governing bodies. It begs the question, though, of what the government is doing about the fiscal inequities in Canadian society and how, if at all, they are attempting to make the wealthy and powerful contribute to the welfare of the country they made their fortunes in. The public's lack of faith in our economic and governmental systems rests ultimately in the perception that the privileged few are left to grow wealthier still,

while the common people struggle under the bulk of our country's financial burdens.

This sort of musing is particularly pertinent in the wake of the new Liberal government's first federal budget. To Finance Minister Paul Martin's credit, this budget has little in the way of tax increases-- but a number of tax loopholes have been closed off, and changes in UI (unemployment insurance) eligibility and benefits (coupled with tough cuts in the military and public service) have led many to claim that, as usual, it is the "little guy" who takes it on the chin. This is far from entirely true-- the UI reforms, for instance, contain new levels of benefits for persons of particular need-- but as always, the average consumer is left wondering how much the rich folk are contributing to the remedy of our country's economic woes.

Take the deficit, for example. For years this has been, albeit not without just cause, our country's overriding economic obsession. Everything from GST revenues to social services eliminations has been laid on the sacrificial altar of deficit-cutting, and it has begun to look like nothing short of a miracle can eliminate the national debt, which has soared to well over forty BILLION dollars. It's hard to envision the concept of a billion dollars, let alone how one might spend it, to say nothing of how we plan to repay it-- especially in a society where we're hard-pressed to support present and future governmental programs, let alone eliminate our debt-load. Federal governments have been flirting with increasingly brutal cuts in services and programs so as to

even begin to chip away a few million here and there from our debt. It seems almost hopeless.

Paradoxically, though, we live in a society where individual persons can become billionaires. Think about that: billions of dollars in the hands of individual people. A recent survey indicates that there are about thirty bona fide billionaires in Canada. That's at least thirty billion dollars (assuming they're all worth at least a billion bucks)-- probably about three quarters of the money needed to repay the deficit, in the hands of a privileged few whose primary interests are, it seems, the perpetuation of their own personal fortunes.

It is those who have the most who seem to think that they owe the government the least. Take the Maritimes' own self-made multimillionaire K.C. Irving, who in the latter days of his life sought sun, sand and tax-free living outside of Canada. His story is by no means unique. Hundreds of wealthy Canadians are seeking offshore tax shelters in ever-increasing numbers, with either themselves or their finances taking up residence in such spots as Barbados and the Cayman Islands. It's the logical end of the (North) American Dream-- the potential for unlimited personal material gain.

Why our nation's billionaires and their ilk do not devote more of their wealth to the well-being of their country is a matter best left to their consciences. What one does wonder, though, is why the government does not impose sterner taxation on people possessed of ridiculously large amounts of money that

they cannot possibly need to live. It seems rather perverse that our country's respect for the sanctity of personal material gain outweighs the moral imperative to ensure the survival and basic well-being of our citizenry as a whole.

The unspoken law of modern North American economics seem to be looking out for number one, and in the face of glaring societal inequities it's little wonder that many people become cynical. Citizens boast self-righteously of tax evasion, and the government got its bitterest taste of public discontent from Quebec's recent cigarette tax revolt. If people think they are paying more than their fair share of taxes for less than their fair share of benefits, it's only natural that they should feel alienated from their country.

Civil disobedience like the tax-free cigarette sales is no more justifiable than the efforts of the rich to dodge taxes, but both are indicative of the selfishly vicious circle that a laissez-faire capitalist system can be. The federal government should work harder to ensure that those most able to pay contribute the most taxes, in hopes of creating a fairer, more efficient tax system and working to erase our country's crippling debt. We're all in this together. If it's every man for himself, we can't expect any man to be for the government.

Sean McQuaid
The Poor Little Rich Editor

Caged Panthers

To the Panther Cage Club:

On behalf of myself and the rest of the U.P.E.I. Men's Basketball Team, I would like to express my extreme gratitude of your extended support of the Panthers. Your support not only boosts team morale, but also adds greatly to the overall atmosphere of the game. Your presence helps our team greatly in various aspects of the game and helps get other fans into the game as well. The members of the Panthers consider you a valuable asset to the program and a major reason leading to our excellent home record this year. After seeing

fans of other schools around the country, I have come to the conclusion that the Panther Cage Club is second to none.

The Panthers would also like to extend thanks to Kim Griffin for her continued hard work for U.P.E.I. The Cage Club is yet another great idea of Ms. Griffin's that adds to the greatness of U.P.E.I.'s athletics.

Once again, the U.P.E.I. Men's Panthers would like to thank The Cage for their unprecedented display of school spirit and team support. Your presence is valued greatly and hopefully you will be there supporting us for the rest of the season and for many seasons to come. Keep up the excellent work.

Sincerely,
George Morrison,
Head Coach--

U.P.E.I. Men's Basketball Panthers

Gosh-darn apathy

X-Press,
I am writing this message concerning the

school spirit at U.P.E.I. I feel that we need more promotion on all school sports and activities. Myself a member of the school rugby team, I feel that we need more people involved in all of the activities at U.P.E.I.

High Schools have more school spirit than U.P.E.I. and that doesn't seem right. University is not only supposed to be academics, but fun also!

Bobby

Want something done, do it yourself

Lately everyone seems to be complaining that the students of UPEI have no school spirit. Well, have you ever thought that the responsibility for this lies on your shoulders? You, the student, have to shrug off your shroud of apathy and display the reality that you actually enjoy going to UPEI; that you're not just here because you couldn't go anywhere else.

So, on this topic I would like to commend and give some recognition to a group of UPEI

students who try to crack the invisible wall of indifference which encloses us when we are at this school's basketball games: THE PANTHER CAGE. This organization tries to inject some 'school spirit' into the games by being loud and vocal cheerleaders for the Panthers. Anyone who has been to a game knows who I am writing about: they are the huddle of painted guys who sit across from the opposing team's bench and throughout the game attempt to induce the wave, along with chanting for the Panthers, against their opponents, and at the referees. They make the game more enjoyable to watch and turn the UPEI fieldhouse into a loud, snarling Panther den.

Unfortunately, with the home basketball season over, it is too late for you to join them at any of the home games, but with AUAA's approaching soon, a trip to Halifax to cheer on the team would be a good excuse to get off the Island.

So to Jay and the rest of the Cage, thanks for making games this year more enjoyable to be a spectator at.

A true Panther fan,
Scott MacDonald