



# Muddling through, Canadian style

BY ALLAN FOTHERINGHAM

*Zowie, Dr. Foth, how propitious it is to intercept your incessant perambulations.*

What, in totality, is the exactitude of the vacuumosity in the ineptitude of your cranial capacity?

*Well, gee, I must admit I was getting a bit bored with your incessant blathering on about your African adventures.*

As a matter of fact, so was I. What particularly is bothering you, if we may get down to specifics?

*Well, I know you think you've been off saving South Africa from itself, but while you've been gone, Canada is falling apart.*

That is goofiness and dreamworld. Not to mention piffle and codswallop.

*Yeah, but you've been out of the country for several months.*

Exactly. Distance is a great savior. It would do the country enormous good if the entire population was shipped abroad for several months. It would be a wise use of tax dollars.

*You don't believe Canada is about to fall asunder?*

About as much chance as the Toronto Maple Leafs have of winning the Stanley Cup.

*Really?*

As a matter of fact, less. The Maple Leafs have no chance for the bauble, since they ain't got the talent.

*You're suggesting that Canada has?*

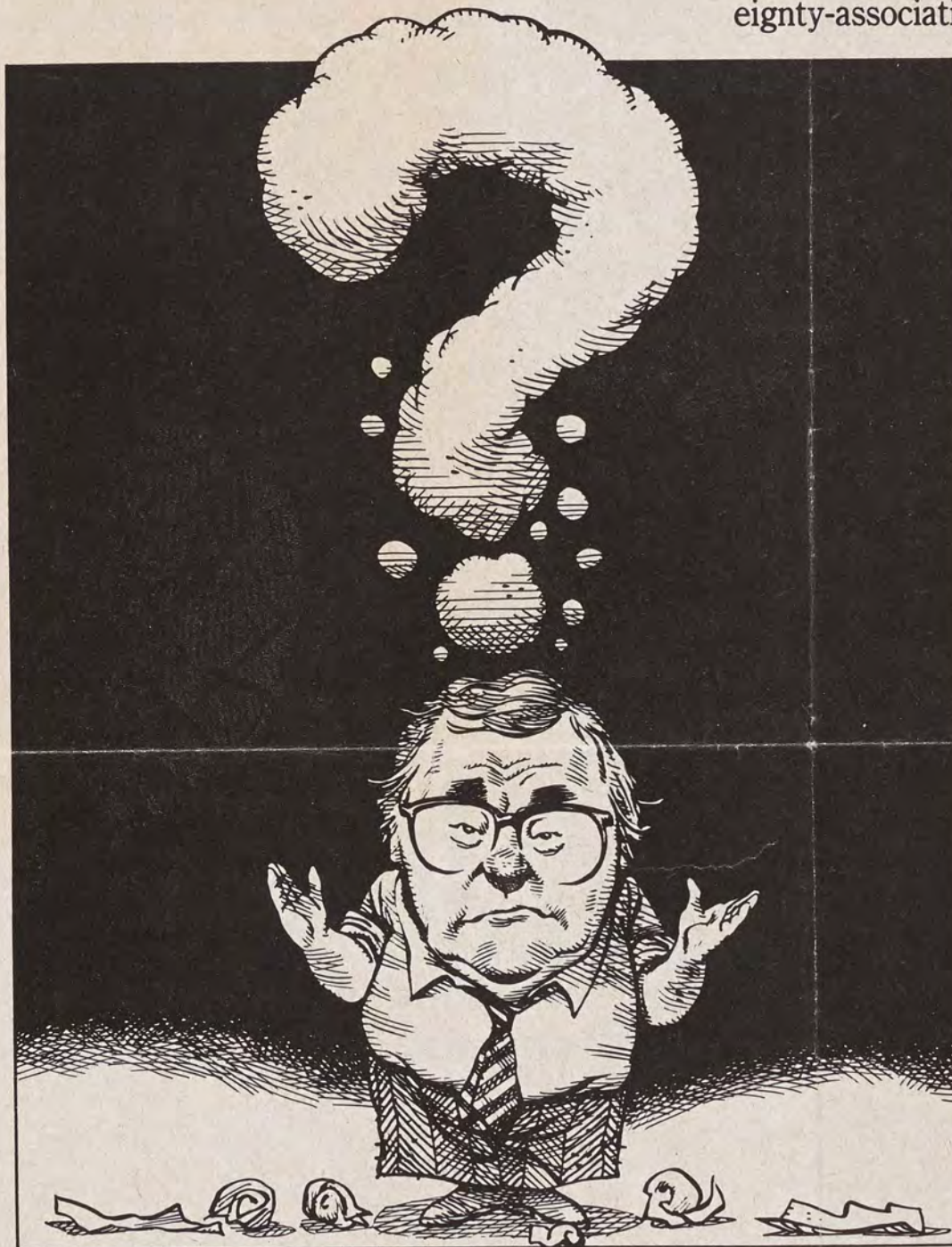
Of course. The genius of this country is that it—learning from the Brits—muddles through.

*Gotcha there. The French mind, unlike the English mind, likes to have things laid down in precise fashion. That's why the French, who like to organize their sex life into a regular pattern with a mistress on Thursday afternoons, can't understand the English who fumble around with affairs that end in divorce.*

Granted. Francophones will never understand anglophones in this country. Should never be expected to. Not to mention the anglo-saxophones—those immigrants of neither founding people.

*You're meandering around. What's your point?*

My point is that this country revels in angst.



It is the national equivalent of the Archie Bunker marriage: only content in bitching, one against the other.

*You're suggesting that the intellectual giant Robert Bourassa is bluffing when he says Quebec will not accept any diminution of the original Meech Lake accord?*

Not at all. Bobby B., the "hotdog eater" as the charitable P. Trudeau used to call him, is an extremely shrewd survivor. René Lévesque's nascent separatist movement was hatched in Bourassa's basement and Boo-Boo opted out only a day before Lévesque's announcement of his new party.

*So?*

So, it's well-known that Bourassa says privately that if anyone has to take Quebec out of Canada it's going to be him—not Jacques Parizeau and the Parti Québécois.

*What's your point?*

My point is that Bourassa's stubbornness on

Meech Lake is all done to keep one nationalist step ahead of the PQ.

*Yes, but the newly confident Quebec business community says it is sure Quebec could go it alone.*

Businessmen do not have the monopoly on wisdom. Otherwise our countries would be run by the Donald Trumps and the Robert Campeaus. Businessmen don't have many votes.

*Granted. But you saw that new poll indicating that most Quebecers now favor separation?*

Yes, but I also noted the most significant factor in that same poll.

*What would that be, pray tell?*

It was that an even higher percentage was in favor of sovereignty-association.

*Could you explain to me exactly what sovereignty-association means?*

Certainly. That's what I'm here for. Sovereignty-association, as some wise chap has pointed out, is like divorce with bed privileges. You come home on weekends for a little nooky.

*So you're saying Quebec wants it both ways?*

Don't we all? The West-mount Rhodesians in Montreal had it for generations, the joy of living in the most civilized city in the country without having to learn the language. The Québécois simply feel it's their turn to be on their own but not quite on their own. (British Columbia has enjoyed this status for eons.)

*Get serious. You don't seem to be worried at all about this crisis.*

It's not a crisis—only among politicians and editorial writers. It's a natural Canadian condition, a navel-gazing cottage industry that keeps CBC reporters employed. If you want to see a crisis, go to Poland, go to—

*if you'll excuse me—South*

Africa. That's the real stuff. This is small beer.

*Excuse me, but it's not small beer to someone in Moose Jaw who thinks his country is breaking up and the disjointed parts are going to be swallowed up by the Excited States of America.*

The ever-squabbling parts are not going to be swallowed by the U.S.A. The country may become different but it will remain a country.

*How so?*

It may become somewhat like the European Community which, if you think about it, is about to adopt a form of sovereignty-association—separate but linked.

*So you're saying...*

I'm saying there are not going to be any guards at the Quebec border. You won't have to change your money. The sun will come up and children will play in the street.

*Golly, Dr. Foth, you once again have muddied the fuzzification. The nation is grateful to you.*

Think nothing of it.