BREAKING BONES IN POLITICAL CARTOONING: AISLIN AND THE FREE TRADE FIGHT OF 1988

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Abstract

Entertainer or agent provocateur? The modern Canadian political cartoonist, historically speaking, possesses a split identity. *The Gazette* cartoonist Terry Mosher – a.k.a. Aislin – in his experience, career and involvement in the fall 1988 fight against free trade, illustrates the tension inherent in the identity of the modern Canadian political cartoonist. Mosher's experience offers a theory as to what circumstances might compel a cartoonist to break *the cartoonist's compromise* – an informal promise not to use their powerful platform to advance a coherent, systematic and specific political agenda or aim in exchange for editorial independence, journalistic "status," and proper financial remuneration – a state of affairs modern cartoonists are, under normal circumstances, happy to accept.

Fantaisiste ou agent provocateur? Le caricaturiste politique canadien moderne souffre, au sens historique, d'une double personnalité. Dans son expérience, sa carrière et son implication en automne 1988 contre le libre-échange, Terry Mosher, du 'The Gazette', aussi connu sous le nom de 'Aislin', met en évidence la dichotomie d'identité du caracaturiste moderne. L'expérience de M. Mosher nous offre une théorie en ce qui concerne les circonstances qui amèneraient à rompre '*le compromis du caricaturiste*', une promesse, sans caractère officiel, à laquelle il s'engage à ne pas se servir de sa tribune afin de faire valoir un agenda politique cohérent, systématique et spécifique. En général, ses pairs se contentaient de leur indépendance du rédacteur, de leur prestige professionnel ainsi que d'un salaire satisfaisant en échange de ne pas essayer de prêcher leur propre programme politique.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1. Introduction.

"I'm very insistent on my own independence. I've been very pushy about that and established that and maybe even made them nervous sometimes – back in the bad old days threatening to throw editors through windows and stuff. I was a real terror for a period of time. That carries over and still makes them a little nervous. But I don't care. So what if I've turned into a gentle guy who loves his wife and all that stuff? It doesn't matter. If it makes them a little nervous and gets the cartoons in newspaper, that's fine." -Terry Mosher[1]

Figure 1 Terry Mosher is Aislin.

Aislin, "Aislin by Aislin." Published *Bay Promotion*, Dec. 20, 1989. McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, P090-D01/1242.

I. A Night on the Town.

Had he not been a temperance man,[2] John Wilson Bengough would have made a formidable drinking buddy for Terry Mosher amid the raucous debauchery that punctuated the first half of Mosher's career. Though the political cartoonists worked a hundred years apart, this pair would have had one hell of a night on the town. The Montrealer, Mosher, alias Aislin, was the "savage darling"[3] of 1970s and 80s Canadian political caricature. The Torontonian, Bengough, sometimes alias Barnaby Rudge, was the Victorian era "father" of Canadian political cartooning. But this duo would have, had they shared drinks at the Toronto Press Club, argued until they were blue in the face, or

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[1] Interview with Terry Mosher, 11/09/03.
[2], Stan Kutcher. "J.W. Bengough and the Millenium in Hogtown: A Study of Motivation in Urban Reform." *Urban History Review*, 76, no.2 (1976). 31.
[3] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds* P090 – C/47-3662 "Press Clippings, 1978." (*Chatlaine*, June/July 1978.)

more likely, black, bloody and bruised from the fisticuffs that would all too often announce the end of an evenings festivities for Mosher.[4]

Figure 2 The "father" of Canadian political cartooning, John W. Bengough.

J. W. Bengough, National Archives of Canada, C100407. Source: Cummings, Carman. *Sketches from a Young Country: The Images of Grip Magazine.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1997. Frontispiece.

Their disagreement would not be about changes to the watchdog role of the political cartoonist. In fact, on such an outing, this part of the evening would have passed swimmingly. Over a hundred years apart, the expectations transmitted in Bengough and Mosher's political cartoons look much the same: that elected officials must act with integrity and that government must operate, justly and solely, in the public interest. In the fall of 1873, Bengough's at first self-produced, lithographed weekly "magazine" *Grip* gained notoriety only months after its first issue for its zealous assault on the government of Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, over the Pacific railway scandal. Macdonald's government would eventually fall after correspondence surfaced in the House of Commons that proved Macdonald's October 1872 re-election bid was financed in large part by the railroad consortium hoping to land

[4]Aislin. *Where's the Trough? And Other Aislin Cartoons.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1985. (Introduction). American cartoonist Patrick Oliphant suggests it is not a coincidence that the first two times he met Mosher, the Montrealer was "bleeding from the face and covered in welts," noting, "anyone as mean as this guy is likely to be invited to go four rounds by the Pope himself." The second time they met, Oliphant observed, Mosher had been banned for life from the Toronto Press Club, again for brawling. In 1985 Mosher underwent rehabilitation for drug and alcohol abuse. He has remained clean and sober ever since.

the lucrative continent-wide rail-building contract.[5] Bengough's cartoons, enjoyable to both the educated and illiterate alike, did much to draw attention and outrage to the scandal by, for the first time in the very young nation's history, presenting Canadian politics as entertainment. When Macdonald's government fell, Bengough's favoured Liberals, led by "dour moralist" Alexander Mackenzie, took power January 22, 1874, in Canada's first single-day election, and immediately set about cleaning up government.[6] In an era before firm principles of democratic and ethical conduct in government had taken hold, the political cartoon as interpreted by J. W. Bengough was at the bulwark of Canada's flowering democracy, protecting against corruption and abuse of power in government.

Fast-forwarding a century ahead, the ethical lapses of another Conservative government – that of Brian Mulroney, was drawing an impassioned response from a field of political cartoonists, though in a vastly different media landscape. Political cartoons had become

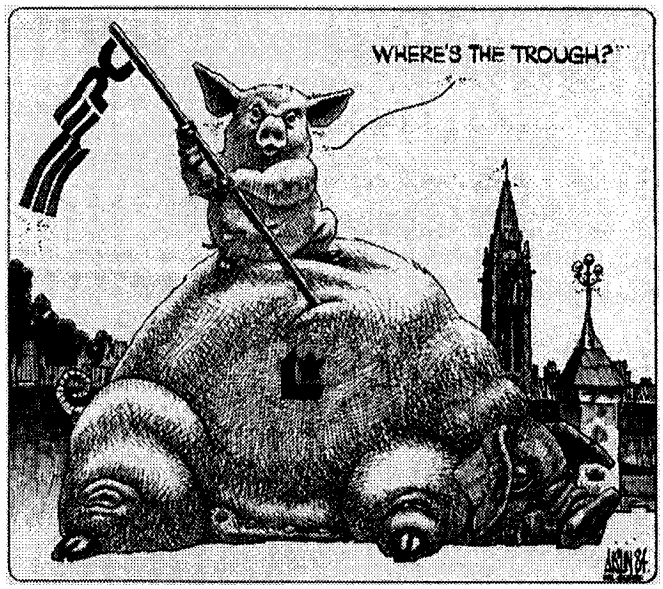


Figure 3 Mosher and other cartoonists used the pig to symbolize government bloated by patronage and corruption.

Aislin, "Where's the Trough?" Published *The Gazette*, September 4, 1984. Source: Aislin. *Where's the Trough? And Other Aislin Cartoons*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1985. (No pagination.)

[5] David R Spencer."Bringing Down Giants: Thomas Nast, John Wilson Bengough and the Maturing of Political Cartooning." *American Journalism* 15, no.3 (Summer 1998): 72.
[6] John Duffy. *Fights of our Lives: Elections, Leadership, and the Making of Canada*. Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. 2002. 20.

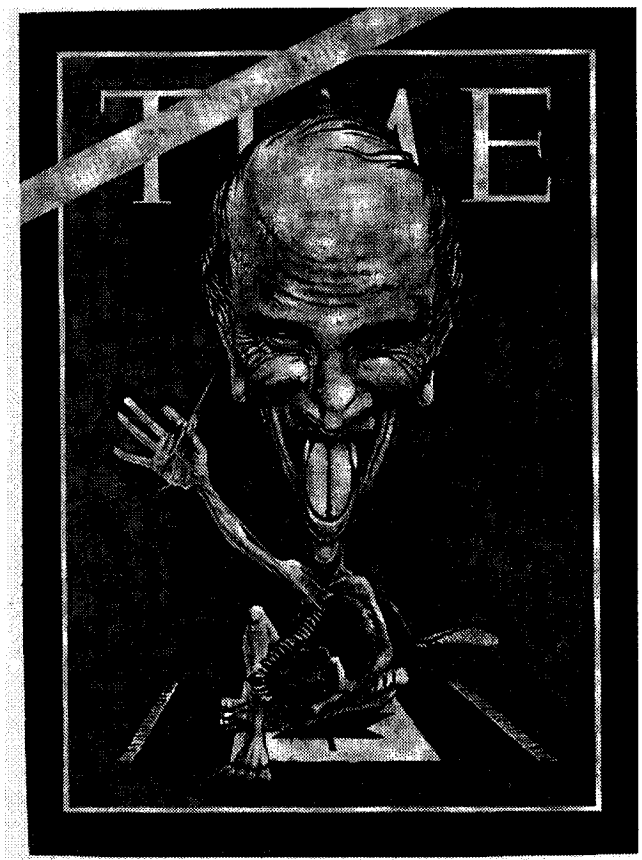
mainstays of daily newspapers since the 1890s, but radio and television had by mid-century begun breaking the newspaper's hegemony over public discourse. Yet, despite the arrival of mass media, armed with financial security and growing editorial independence by the late 1950s, political cartoonists continued to present some of the most incisive, potent commentary positioned to interpret the actions of government to the public.

Among these Canadian editorial page cartoonists, Mosher responded most fervently, obsessively almost, in his efforts to satirize, caricature and antagonize the man he eventually singled out publicly as his political cartooning *raison d'être.*[7] Unlike Bengough, Mosher did not have the pleasure of helping Mulroney fall on his sword. The Prime Minister survived despite a litany of scandals punctuating the Conservative Party's nine-year stay in power and a fiercely divisive free-trade election that saw Mosher take the unprecedented step of temporarily shedding his journalistic impartiality to publicly lend his drawing hand to the anti-free trade forces opposing the Mulroney-backed deal. Still, those Canadian political cartoonists, among whom Mosher can claim the vanguard position, can recognize a partial victory, at least, in their nine-year crusade of mockery and derision. Their role in destroying the Mulroney government's credibility in the public imagination helped lay waste to Mulroney's aspirations[8] that the Conservative Party he revitalized might replace the Liberals as Canada's "natural governing party." A decade after their inglorious 1993 electoral defeat, the Tories, haunted by the ghost of Mulroney's caricature, still cannot field a contender. Despite the arrival of a media landscape kaleidoscoped by the birth of the photograph, the radio, and eventually the

[7] Aislin. *Drawing Bones: My 15 years of Cartooning Brian Mulroney.* Toronto: Key Porter Books Ltd., 1991. 4.
[8] Desmond Morton. *A Short History of Canada.* Toronto: McClelland & Steward, 1997. 315.

ubiquitous televised image, the Canadian political cartoon remained, a century after Bengough popularized it, a sentinel against those who might violate the now rooted standards of ethical conduct and sound government

Yes, there is no doubt. The first half the of the evening would have gone swimmingly as Mosher would recount how he used the Tory piglet to symbolize government bloated by corruption and greed – and how he kept fattening the piggy up as the years went by. He would tell the story of his first big splash, appalling readers of the legendary Henry Luce's *Time* magazine, his second year as a professional cartoonist. His caustic, cover-page caricature showed Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, naked, stitching together a beaver – Trudeau's Canada – but "sewing [shut] the beaver's mouth first."[9] Not to be outdone, Bengough would



Time Magazine, 196

Figure 4 Trudeau reportedly enjoyed a good laugh at this Aislin caricature for the cover of *Time* – Mosher's first big splash.

Aisin, "Trudeau Cover." Published *Time*, October 31, 1969. Source: Aislin. *Stretch Marks: 15 Years of Aislin Cartoons*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1982. (No pagination.)

[9] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03. The Trudeau caricature was the cover of *Time Magazine's* October 31, 1969 edition. The caricature "provoked more reader response than most Canadian covers they'd run before. Most of it – no…all of it – unfavourable." McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds,* P090 – C/47-3652 "Press Clippings, 1969."

boast that he popularized[10] the figure of "Miss Canada," a "beautiful, wholesome, hopeful maiden," wearing the Phrygian cap of the freed slaves of Roman times, decorated with maple leaves and a beaver, to personify the promising young nation.[11] The image would be as enduring and ubiquitous in the iconography of Canadian political cartooning as Uncle Sam was in the American. The duo might pause a moment to contemplate why, aside from "Miss Canada," caricatures of recognizable women so seldom sprang from their inkwells. But, historically speaking, politics in Canada being mostly a man's game, and the political cartoon being a manly endeavour – presently in Canada only one woman works as a full-time editorial page cartoonist at a major daily[12] and among Americans only six of 70 full-time editorial page cartoonists working in 1988 were women[13]– they would not delve so deeply as some historians have for answers to that question.[14]

No. None of these would provide the flint spark to ignite Bengough and Mosher's inevitable row. Rather, the evening's revelry would take a turn for the worse when conversation settled on the topic of the identity and therefore purpose of the political cartoonist. This is the topic that would set the uncompromising Christian moralist and

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[10] Bengough was not the first cartoonist to draw Miss Canada.

[11] Christina Burr. "Gender, Sexuality and Nationalism in J.W. Bengough's Verses and Political Cartoons." *Canadian Historical Review*, 83, no. 4. (Winter 2002): 517-518.

[12] Association of Canadian Editorial Cartoonists. "Directory of Active full-time editorial cartoonists." *http://www.canadiancartoonists.com/vets.htm*. Susan Dewar has drawn cartoons for the *Ottawa Sun* since 1988. She is the sole woman listed among the 21 active full-time editorial cartoonists listed in the ACEC's directory.

[13] Lucy Shelton Caswell. "Edwina Dumm: Pioneer Woman Editorial Cartoonist, 1915-1917." *Journalism History*, 15, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 2. Caswell notes her source as a "Telephone interview with Jim Larrick, Secretary-treasurer of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists."

[14] For more on Bengough's attitudes toward gender see Christina Burr. "Gender, Sexuality and Nationalism in J.W. Bengough's Verses and Political Cartoons." *Canadian Historical Review*, 83, no. 4. (Winter 2002): 505-554. Little is known about Canadian women who were political comic artists. For more on early American women editorial cartoonists, comic artists and suffrage cartoonists see: Alice Sheppard. "There Were Ladies Present: American Women Cartoonists and Comic Artists in the Early 20th Century." *Journal of American Culture*, 7, (Fall 1984): 38-48; Alice Sheppard. *Cartooning for Suffrage*: Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 1994; and, Lucy Shelton Caswell. "Edwina Dumm: Pioneer Woman Editorial Cartoonist, 1915-1917." *Journalism History*, 15, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 2-7. A complete and comprehensive study of Mosher's attitudes toward gender is outside the immediate scope of this inquiry, but well deserving of investigation in future studies.

reformer against the bullying, agnostic libertine and individualist. A cartoonist, Mosher would declare with finality, is a rascal at heart. "Any cartoonist who tries to be a political person or a propagandist is going to fail. That's not what it's all about. We're not smarter than the politicians, we just poke fun at them and we do it for people."[15] And Bengough's features would harden as Mosher's rant gained steam.

Take Duncan Macpherson, Mosher would continue, referring to the bellicose *Toronto Star* editorial page cartoonist of the 1950s through 70s who most informs Mosher's sense of who the Canadian political cartoonist is, and how that identity should command his or her purpose.

Figure 5 Miss Canada, in a less wholesome moment. Bengough's temperance stance converged neatly with his criticism of Macdonald, an alcoholic.

J.W. Bengough, "How Long is this Spree Going to Last?" Published *Grip*, September 5, 1885 Source: Cummings, Carman. *Sketches from a Young Country: The Images of Grip Magazine*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1997. 43.

"What he did was yell back at the machine and he did it for people out there who could say 'ha, look at that one!' and the politicians pretended to love it."[16] It is a refrain Mosher has repeated frequently since he and friend, journalist and media scholar Peter Desbarats researched, wrote and published *The Hecklers*, the first comprehensive history of the

[15] Interview with Mosher 11/09/03.
[16] Interview with Mosher 11/09/03.

Canadian political cartoon since Confederation. The book was the first to articulate the identity of the modern political cartoonist and established Mosher as principal spokesperson for the profession.

Defiance, mischievousness, edge, anger. These are the words that would ring in Bengough's ears as Mosher, the high school drop-out who forged his diploma to fasten down his acceptance to Québec City's École des Beaux Arts, described the traits of the great modern political cartoonists. Maverick, savage, even "dangerous:"[17] Mosher's bellowing laugh would drown out his enumeration of just a few of the epithets thrown his way since he ambled into the *Montreal Star* on December 11,

Figure 6 "Dangerous" or mischievous? Mosher was denounced in the House of Commons for this cartoon that Conservative MPs believed depicted Mulroney murdered in the snow outside his Westmount home. Can you tell that neighbour and fellow former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau has merely tripped Mulroney, upon an encounter while out for a leisurely stroll?

Aislin, "Mulroney Returns Home." Published *The Gazette*, March 18, 1993. Source: *The Gazette*, March 18, 1993.

[17] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, PO90-A01.2/070 "Self-Portrait – Denounced in House of Commons" Pub. *The Gazette*, March 19,1993. The quote is taken from a March 18, 1993 letter written by Barbara McDougal, Canadian Secretary of Sate for External Affairs under Mulroney, to then *Gazette* editorial page editor Joan Fraser. "Nothing better illustrates this dangerous mindset by Aislin than this morning's cartoon depicting – with great pleasure – a physical assault upon Prime Minister Mulroney on his return to Montreal.... The cartoon indicates," she chastised *The Gazette*, "that acts of violence – including assassination – against the Prime Minister are both humorous and can be condoned." Conservative MPs denounced the March 18 cartoon that day in the House of Commons. Mosher's March 19 cartoon depicted him jubilantly celebrating the high-level response – "Victory is Mine!" Aislin cheers cheekily, though it should be noted he clarifies the previous day's cartoon, a clear acknowledgement that his cartoon did not clearly communicate its intended message.

1967, by coincidence the day resident cartoonist Frank McNally broke his leg, and was told to hurry up, a cartoon was needed right away for the editorial page. [18] Mosher has, first at the *Star* and then from 1971 on at *The Gazette*, worn these monikers, and others much more venomous, with pride, as a kind of crown of thorns. Each torrent of bile from a politician wronged, each angry tirade from a reader appalled has been, for Mosher, another chisel-stroke sculpting the cartoonist's place in pantheon of controversial and pioneering Canadian satirists. And despite the best efforts – to knock it off – of those on whose enemies-list he is prominently featured, the statue of Mosher's accomplishment continues to take shape, prominent tongue stuck out in defiant mockery and delight.

With Mosher now on a roll, slamming down his pint like a gavel for emphasis, Bengough, though flummoxed and red-faced, would simply let the man finish his tirade before having his

Figure 7 Mosher's cartoon the following day. Notice he explains the previous day's offering. He was much less apologetic in his correspondence with MPs.

Aislin, "Self-Portrait–Denounced in House of Commons." Published *The Gazette*, March 19, 1993. McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, PO90-A01.2/070.

[18] McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3667 "Press Clippings, 1982:" "The Cartoonists by Themselves." *Montreal Calendar Magazine*. April 1982. The cartoon, "African Ballet Raided by Police," published *Montreal Star*, Dec 11, 1967, would be Mosher's first to appear on an editorial page: McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, P090-A/001-0005.

say. The Canadian political cartoonist's freedom, independence and respect were won fighting tooth and nail, Mosher would intone. Between the 1890s and 1950s, North American cartoonists were mere illustrators, mere extensions of the views of the editorial board of their newspaper[19] – editorial boards influenced heavily, at first, by the political parties, and later, the business interests that bankrolled them.[20] Canadian cartoonists have greater freedom to diverge from the views of their newspaper's editorial board then do their American counterparts[21] because of this hard-fought status. It has led to a richer tradition of Canadian political cartooning where, unlike their more stylistically homogenous American colleagues, successful Canadian cartoonists work hard to develop an artistically unique and individually expressive cartooning style.[22] Then, as he is prone to doing, Mosher would lift his hand to show off a ring embossed with skulls, a gift from his wife Carol, bought on a trip to Mexico. "I'm not a biker," he would say, eyes twinkling, spinning the skulls around the base of his finger with his other hand. " It's all the editors I've survived here at *The Gazette* – they tend to come and go."[23] And when they arrive thinking they're the final authority on what makes it into an *Aislin* cartoon, some on-the-job training is quickly and decisively dispensed: "My attitude is, I have a point of view like a columnist and you're damn well going to treat me that way or I'm not going to work for you," Mosher was famously quoted in a 1978 interview.[24] This mantra captures the sentiment of the message he has regurgitated for every editor he's worked for in his, so far, 37 years penning editorial page cartoons.

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[19] Desbarats and Mosher, 17, 177.
[20] Raymond Morris. *Behind the Jester's Mask.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1989, 19.
[21] Desbarats and Mosher, 177.
[22] Ibid, 6.
[23] Interview with Terry Mosher, 11/09/03.
[24] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/47-3662 "Press Clippings, 1978," and Desbarats and Mosher, 191.

The modern Canadian political cartoonist has made a fundamental, and Mosher would argue necessary, compromise. Offsetting the independence that allows cartoonists to draw free from editorial oversight has come a sort of unspoken promise not to wield their powerful pulpit as a personal soapbox to advance any coherent or specific ideological or political agenda or aim. Like the reporter who must apply journalistic standards of objectivity and fairness to all parties touched by a particular reporting assignment, the political cartoonist must uniformly treat all political parties, gaffing or errant politicians, vain celebrities, and misguided hoi polloi with rascal-like impertinence and sass. While the compromise is essential in that publishers appear unwilling to allow such a conspicuous and crowning feature of the newspaper to advance a coherent political vision not directly within their control, *the cartoonist's compromise* has not been a difficult one for the inksters to swallow. As Mosher has noted, the politicized editorial cartoonist simply cannot remain relevant to his readership and the cartoonist is at his worst – and least humorous – when playing the propagandist. This is most evident in wartime political cartooning and when a cartoonist's sympathies lie with the party in power. It is in these cases that humour inevitably takes the back seat to transparent cheerleading or preaching. It is simply a fact that cartoonists who see themselves as adversarial and roguish produce the best, most resonant political cartoons. Thus the compromise is a necessary one because the modern reader is not interested in dour, moralistic, ideological cartoons, preferring rather the entertainment-value of the caricaturized joust between governor and the governed. This role of mischievous entertainer and heckler forms the centrepiece of the modern identity of the Canadian political cartoonist.

The political cartoon as a prow-like feature of the daily metropolitan newspaper has immeasurably more reach and impact today than it did during its classical period, in the latter half of the 19th century, during the days of Thomas Nast's *Harper's Weekly*[25] and Joseph Keppler's *Puck*[26] in the United States, or Bengough's *Grip* in Canada, Mosher would state decisively, as he reached the crux of his argument. This success, this achievement, is a result of who the Canadian political cartoonist has become. Only this aggressively autonomous, puckishly mischievous, secular and ideologically non-partisan identity first embodied in Duncan Macpherson and which Mosher later assumed and most vigorously, among practicing cartoonists, articulated and championed, could have earned and ensconced the political cartoonist's venerated and even sacrosanct place in the bedrock of Canadian Journalism. And we modern cartoonists achieved this all *without* the luxury of being the very first to produce a comic book to tantalize an entire society of Victorian prudes, Mosher would conclude impishly, bringing down his beer with a thump and a splash, requiring a livid Bengough to shake several droplets of lager from his now cadaverously white, trembling hand.

Mosher's lecture would prove too much to bear for the indefatigable Christian reformer and didactic cartoonist. Like a preacher gripping his pulpit, Bengough would steady his temper by flattening his hands on the no-man's land of the table separating the interlocutors, as he slowly and deliberately fashioned his reply. "The only way in which

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[25] Nast, whom Bengough cited as his inspiration, known as the father of American political cartooning, rose to prominence in the 1860s on the popularity of his caricatures of the Tweed Ring, the political machine then running New York's Tammany Hall. (Vinson, J. Chal. "Thomas Nast and the American Political Scene." *American Quarterly*, 9, no.3 (Autumn 1957): 337-344.)

[26] Keppler's *Puck*, a "mugwump," meaning non-partisan, publication carried on the assault on corruption at Tammany Hall and in national politics with the first colour cartoons when it began publishing in 1877. No cartoon was published in *Puck* without Keppler's say so. Keppler is said to have unseated Nast as the most important political cartoonist when *Puck* achieved widespread notoriety. (Samuel J. Thomas. "Holding the Tiger: Mugwump Cartoonists and Tammnay Hall in gilded Age New York." *New York History*, 82, no.2 (Spring 2001): 155-182.)

we serve God, is by serving our fellow man," Bengough would begin, looking Mosher squarely in the eyes, his words bristling beneath his bushy moustache, before quoting from his 1895 work *The Doomed Ship*.[27]

> Thou art not thy brother's keeper?
> At that answers deeper, deeper
> Glows the mark – thou knowst thou art.

For Bengough, a man dubbed the "Artist of Righteousness" by Victorian author William Stead,[28] political cartoons were a means to an end: transmitting to Torontonians and Canadians a social morality founded on firm Christian principles.[29] As a journalist, artist and poet, Bengough dedicated himself to this task with fervour, using his cartoons and verses to draw attention to both national issues such as the railway scandal and, more locally, the urban problems accompanying Toronto's explosive growth. Bengough used the pages of *Grip* to endorse specific social programs ranging from the distribution of free school texts to the purification of the water supply.[30] Bengough's commitment to social reform led him in 1907, long after *Grip*'s 1892 demise, to pursue a career in municipal politics, where, as a city alderman, he continued to push for social improvements in Toronto.[31]

"*Grip* has sought to play the part of an educator though dressed in motley;" Bengough would continue, "and upon questions with a distinct moral bearing, he has always striven to be on the right side."[32] Bengough never spoke in *Grip* unless it was through the character of the same-named raven, borrowed from the Charles Dickens

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[27] Kutcher, 33.
[28] Ibid, 31-32.
[29] Ibid, 34.
[30] Ibid, 35.
[31] Ibid, 40.
[32] Ibid, 35. The quote is taken from an 1888 issue of *Grip*.

novel *Barnaby Rudge*.[33] Beginning September 6, 1873, the name "Barnaby Rudge" appeared as co-editor in the masthead of *Grip*. It was not revealed until March 29, 1879 that Barnaby Rudge was, in fact, the zealous and opinionated Torontonian.[34]

Despite the publicly professed didacticism of its mission, Bengough's *Grip* claimed to be non-partisan.[35] Yet *Grip* was rather transparent in its support of political parties or individual politicians that appeared to share Bengough's social gospel principles. The magazine was nowhere near as successful in maintaining its non-partisanship as was, say, the American *Puck*, a mugwump publication motivated by a similar moralist-reformist ideology that sought, by educating the masses, to encourage a return to honesty in government and bring an end to rampant municipal corruption.[36] Rather, the Canadian magazine expressed an obvious preference on the national stage, for example, for the moralistic Liberals "as a political combination less tainted by scandal."[37] Later, *Grip* strongly supported the Toronto mayoralty of an evangelical reformer, William Howland, who was elected in 1886.[38]

With the table shaking beneath his hands, Bengough would rebuke Mosher's account of the contemporary Canadian political cartoonist's identity and aims. Limiting the political cartoon's incredible power to inform and arouse the passions of the public – by reducing the scope of its commentary to mischievous criticism instead of exploring its potential to advocate and affirm – would in Bengough's view, style Mosher and his ilk as

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[33] Spencer, 1998. 70.
[34] Ibid, 76.
[35] Burr, 519.
[36] Thomas, 157-162. Thomas notes "the originally derisive term "Mugwump" was first applied to the independent Republicans in 1884 by the *New York Sun*, citing John G. Sproat, *The Best Men: Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age.* (Oxford University Press, 1968). Thomas provides a bibliography of studies of Mugwump ideology in footnote 8.
[37] Kutcher, 35. These are Kutcher's words, not Bengough's.
[38] Ibid, 37-38.

mere hecklers – an inconsequential peanut gallery – in the crusade to build a better Canada.

Incapable of enduring such a paternalistic tone of voice, Mosher would forcibly interrupt: Canada's political cartoonists have overcome great hurdles to achieve the freedom of expression they now possess; readers will abandon any cartoonist who tries, straight-faced, to sell one-panel solutions to three-dimensional problems. Cartoonists today do not want influence, they want reaction. But nothing Mosher could say would ever put a dent in the convictions of the devout and headstrong Bengough. As the incensed duo moved to settle their differences with brute force – and we shall give Mosher the benefit of the doubt to suggest it is unclear whether the move to fisticuffs was initiated by the teetotalling prohibitionist or the now rehabilitated barroom brawler – the question that would provoke their quarrel remains unanswered: Has the modern Canadian political cartoonist abandoned the crusading spirit of his forefather in order to secure the editorial cartoonist's place in the mainstream of Canadian public discourse?

Mosher, obviously, has had no desire to shape society in the image of his own morality. He firmly believed in *the cartoonist's compromise* and has long downplayed the political cartoon's capacity in politics to have any "real effect."[39] Yet his protestation that "we're not smarter than the politicians, we just poke fun at them" was most notably, in 1988, quite publicly belied. It was in this dramatic moment that Mosher joined a long lineage of Canadian and American political cartoonists who have met an issue they deemed too important to merely heckle or probe for laughs. For Mosher, this issue was the Brian Mulroney's Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. Though Mosher has long argued that it is an integral component of the political cartoonist's individualistic identity

[39] Desbarats and Mosher, 6.

to never pick sides, it is that same bull-headed individualism that compelled Mosher to, in this exceptional instance, not only pick sides but, in breach of *the cartoonist's compromise,* seek to influence the wider political reality. But it must be underlined that Mosher was a reluctant radical, that only what he perceived to be a clear and present menace roused him to fight. From the historian's perspective, it is not surprising that one hundred years after Bengough, another headstrong Canadian should take up "the most incisive and effective form of commentary known to man"[40] to influence Canadians, in a crossroads moment, to take the path of his better judgement on a vital national issue. The future of Canada will no doubt be riddled with stories of such strong-willed inksters doing just that.

Amid the historical literature of the political cartoon, which has proliferated on both sides of the border in the quarter century since the 1979 publication of *The Hecklers* in Canada and 1981 publication of the similarly comprehensive *The Political Cartoon* in the United States, the question of the identity of the political cartoonist has been one of peripheral interest to historians. With regards to the Canadian historiography, rather than addressing the question of how the identity of political cartoonists has shaped the image of Canada they left behind them, historians have mined the political cartoon for what it can tell us about the history of Canada. As historian Scott Vokey has noted, the political cartoon is no longer an aside of social history, but rather a historical artefact capable of depicting personalities and customs: "costumes, songs, colloquialisms, slang, slogans, banners, fashions in food and drink, street scenes, [and] folklore," and can provide "subtle, not so subtle, and even subversive, visualized commentaries on the events and

[40] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3687 "Press Clippings, 1987" (*Gazette* article by C. Balfour, *Gazette* Ombudsperson.)

ideas of a given period."[41] David R. Spencer and Laurence Cros, for example, have each explored Canadian attitudes toward the United States in the Victorian era through the lens of the political cartoon. Yet with the notable exceptions of Bengough, his contemporary, *Montreal Star* cartoonist Henri Julien, and to a lesser extent, the role, in the Maritime Rights movement, of political cartoonists like Donald McRitchie of the *Halifax Herald*, there has been little sustained research focusing on individual Canadian political cartoonists. Most notable is the absence of any work into life and art of pioneering cartoonist Duncan Macpherson, whose biting caricatures haunt the image of former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker just as Bengough's do the image of Sir John A. Macdonald.

Both *The Hecklers*,[42], and the far more probing exploration of the political cartoon in American history, historian Charles Press's expansive work, *The Political Cartoon,* continue to offer perhaps the best glimpses into the mindset and reality of the modern Canadian political cartoonist. While Press's work places into context the role of the cartoonist critic in the totalitarian, authoritarian and democratic society, *The Hecklers* fleshes out snapshot histories of all the important Canadian political cartoonists, while underlining the historical continuity in Canadian history and political cartooning of themes like Federal-Provincial tensions, English-French differences, regional discontent and Canadian wariness of American encroachment. Marxist sociologist Raymond Morris's 1989 and 1995 works, *Behind the Jester's Mask* and *The Carnivalization of Politics*, also investigate the modern Canadian political cartoonist. Morris offers a well-

[41] Scott Vokey. "Inspiration for insurrection or harmless humour? Class and Politics in the Editorial Cartoons of Three Toronto Newspapers During the Early 1930s." *Labour/Le Travail*, 45 (Spring 2000): 141.

[42] Mosher and Desbarats produced a National Film Board documentary of the same name, released in 1975.

argued and contrarian interpretation of the cartoonist's identity and public role, which, while internally coherent, seems unlikely to shape mainstream thinking on the subject.

The probing historical investigations into the life, cartoons and career of J.W. Bengough, not to mention the famous magazine he founded at age twenty-two, offer historians a model for future studies of later Canadian political cartoonists. Carman Cummings provides the most expansive study of Bengough in his 1997 *Sketches of a Young Country.* David R. Spencer, Stanley P. Kutcher and Christina Burr also offer excellent essays on the father of Canadian political cartooning. Burr, in particular, widens the lens of exploration from a focus on Bengough's role in the pacific railway scandal or his religious and political identities and aims to include his attitudes toward gender, sexuality and nationalism. Altogether these works provide a rich knowledge of the identity and motivations of the man credited with popularizing the political cartoon in Canada, and who shaped the Canadian cartoonist's first activist experience.

Bringing our attention back to the Press Club one last time, the punch-up would appear to have been called. Had he not been a temperance man, J.W. Bengough would have probably fared much worse against the practiced, though well-lubricated Montreal brawler. But with Bengough still standing, at least after this first round, a hush would descend upon the Press Club as the establishment's management approached the bloody duo to inform them, in no uncertain terms, of their banishment for life. "Mr. Mosher, my dear sir," an out of breath Bengough would say, helping Mosher to his feet and grinning for the first time that evening. "You may not sound like a great Canadian crusader. But when stirred, you certainly fight like one."

Chapter 2. The Rise of Newspapers and the Political Cartoon

"One slip of Mr. MacNelly's pen is likely to cause me more grief in a day than the words written by all the Tribune *reporters in a year. Yet I plan to let him go right on doing it as unrestrained and unfettered by my own values and tastes as is possible. Why? Simply because the political satires of Jeff MacNelly and those of a handful of similarly talented newspaper cartoonists represent the most incisive and effective form of commentary known to man, and one as vital to the exercise of free speech and open debate as any words that ever appeared on such pages."* – James D. Squires, former editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, writing in April 1984.[1]

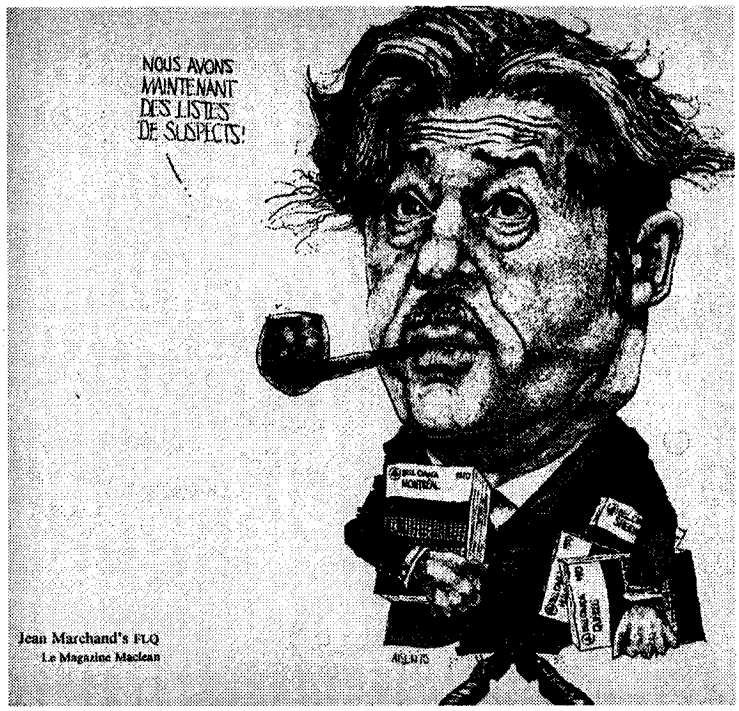

Figure 1 Trudea-era cabinet minister Jean Marchand pilloried over indiscriminate arrests during the 1970 October Crisis. "We now have a list of [FLQ] suspects," says Marchand, holding telephone directories for Montreal, Quebec City, Sherbrooke and Hull.

Aislin, "Jean Marchand." Published *Harper's*, July 1971. Source: Aislin. *Stretch Marks: 15 Years of Aislin Cartoons.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1982. (No pagination.)

I. The Most Incisive and Effective Form of Commentary Known to Man

If the modern Canadian political cartoonist fought hard to achieve his (and eventually her) respected newsroom status, why risk it at all? What was it about Prime Minster Brian Mulroney and his free trade deal that drove Mosher to break *the cartoonist's*

[1] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3687 "Press Clippings, 1987" (*Gazette* article by C. Balfour, *Gazette* Ombudsperson.)

compromise? After all, the modern political cartoonist has appeared quite content to embrace his primary role as entertainer. Before these questions can be answered, we must unravel the history of the political cartoonist – as entertainer and agitator – as well as the mass medium, newspapers, they settled into. Media historian Roger Bird helps us understand the development of the newspaper in Canada's evolving, increasingly urban and mass media-oriented society by dividing the history of the press into five periods. Desbarats and Mosher similarly break up the history of the Canadian political cartoonist into three generations. In understanding the press landscape Mosher encountered in 1967, when he arrived at the *Montreal Star*, one that rewarded cartoonists who could deliver readers, rather than stir readers to action, the improbability of his later politicization is apparent; Improbable, yet not without reason, as we shall see.

The first two press periods, 1752-1807 and 1807 to 1858, were characterised, at first, by pioneer journalism in what would become eastern and central Canada. As populations stabilized and grew, small newspapers popped up to serve the growing communities, with towns too small to be recognized on a map today sometimes supporting two or three periodicals.[2] An explosion of newspapers in Canada East and Canada West in the 1850s reflected "both the public's hunger for news and the publisher's desire for both political influence and profit." By 1857, there were 291 newspapers published in the provinces that made up British North America.[3] The technology did not yet exist to easily adorn the pages of these newspapers with illustrations. The only illustrated periodical to surface in this time was a Montreal bi-weekly called *Punch in Canada,* which Irish immigrant J.B.

[2] Bird singles out the *Halifax Herald*, first published March 23,1752, as the first Canadian newspaper.
[3] Roger Bird. "The Press in Canada: An Historical Overview." In *Communications in Canadian Society*, ed. Craig Mackie and Benjamin D. Singer, 29-44. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc. 2001. 31.

Walker illustrated and published beginning in 1849. The magazine, a nod to Britain's famous comic journal *Punch*, featured a full-page cartoon every issue. Within three months the comic journal claimed a circulation of 3,000 and it soon moved to Toronto and began publishing weekly, but folded after only two years.[4] Historian David R. Spencer notes that *Punch in Canada* preceded the first American comic journal, *Illustrated American News*, by two years, making it the first North American journal of its kind and that in taking the unprecedented step of trying to distance journalism from political partisanship, "Canada's Victorian political cartoonists were the nation's first independent editorialists.[5]

Bird's third press period, 1858 to 1900, is characterized by similar pioneer journalism, but along the fast-expanding western frontier, in small communities whose growth was fuelled by gold discoveries and trading opportunities. By 1900 the total number of newspapers nationally skyrocketed to 1227, up from 291 newspapers in 1857.[6] Early in the period cartoons appeared mainly in obscure journals in Toronto and Montreal. By the late 1860s, however, aided by the facility of publishing cartoons using emerging lithographic technology – the process of printing from a surface rather than the time consuming method of engraving – small comic journals began to appear, like Montreal's *Canadian Illustrated News* and its French counterpart *L'Opinion Publique*, the first in a series of comic journals produced by Georges Edouard Desbarats' Montreal printing company.[7] Ultimately, Bengough's *Grip* would emerge as the defining Canadian comic journal of the period with an almost 20-year print run. Spencer called this

[4] Desbarats and Mosher, 40.
[5] David R Spencer. "The "Art" of Politics Victorian Canadian Political Cartoonists Look At Canada-U.S. Relations." *Media History Monographs: an online journal of Media History*, 6, no.1 (2003): 5.
[6] Bird, 32-33.
[7] Spencer, 2003. 8-9.

Victorian era backdrop "the greatest period of intellectual ferment since the Protestant Reformation," and underscored the political cartoonist's role in driving these revolutions in thought in the Canadian context.[8]

The end of the 50-year press period, which approximates Desbarats and Mosher's first generation of political cartooning, finally saw the beginning of editorial cartooning in newspapers. Henri Julien, who in April 1888 began workings as chief cartoonist and illustrator for the *Montreal Daily Star* is said to be Canada's first.[9] Julien took the job after building a successful freelance career drawing cartoons for publications including *Grip* and *Harper's Weekly* and smaller Québécois comic journals.[10] At this point, cartoons were becoming, for politically partisan publishers, an important and powerful means of communicating with the still largely illiterate citizenry,[11] particularly on the political issues of the day and during elections. Unlike the irreverent and opinionated Bengough, the apolitical Julien[12] foreshadowed the docile political cartoonist of the next press period and generation of political cartoonists, one perfectly suited to the needs of the "publisher-capitalist"[13] of the emerging mass metropolitan daily newspaper

The fourth press period, 1900-1952 was marked by the replacement of the weekly newspaper with the big-circulation daily.[14] This development accompanied the massive trend toward urban migration that would see the proportion of urban citizens rise from 37 per cent in 1901 to 62.9 per cent in 1951, effectively reversing the ratio of urban and rural

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[8] Spencer, 2003. 6.
[9] Ibid. 6.
[10] Desbarats and Mosher, 66.
[11] Raymond Morris. *Behind the Jester's Mask.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1989, 19.
[12] Desbarats and Mosher, 61.
[13] Bird, 33.
[14] Ibid, 33.

citizens over the period.[15] "The booming population, widespread growth of literacy, and faster production methods meant a huge increase in total daily newspaper circulation and the circulation of individual dailies."[16] In this era survival depended on aggressive competition, one way in which political cartoons, a popular feature for readers, emerged as an important way of attracting readership. Though between 1900 and 1950 the number of daily newspapers in Canada declined from 121 to 94 – and the 66 competing daily papers in the 18 communities supporting at least two newspapers dropped to 34 competing newspaper in 11 communities supporting two or more papers – combined circulation rose six times from 600,000 to 3.5 million.[17] The profit-driven publisher-capitalist, during this period, oversaw "what one historian has called 'a Victorian authority,' the predominant social, political, and economic force in Canadian life, replacing the sermon, the school, the circulating library, and the political speech as a guide to private thought and social attitudes."[18]

During the concurrent second generation of political cartooning, cartoonists, typically uneducated, of modest income and remarkable for their artistic talent and satirical sensibility rather than their political acumen or connections, drifted from one employer to the next.[19] To sate an increasing demand for visually stimulating news pages and broadcast their status as a newspaper of importance, publishers hired cartoonists but tightly controlled their work and their fortunes. Consequently, the political cartoonist's role as an entertainer grew in importance.[20] The only examples of cartoonists exploring

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[15] David R. Hall. "The Growth of the Mass Media in Canada." In *Communications in Canadian Society*, ed. Craig Mackie and Benjamin D. Singer, 12-28. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, Inc. 2001. 13.
[16] Bird, 33.
[17] Ibid, 34.
[18] Ibid, 33.
[19] Desbarats and Mosher, 17.
[20] Desbarats and Mosher, 82.

the activist potential of their work occurred at the behest of an activist publisher. Political cartoonists were discouraged from taking below-the-belt shots at politicians while direct "jabs" were acceptable.[21] It was open season when it came to the traditional disputes of local and national Canadian politics, but cartoons exploring the serious economic and political problems of the depression years, for example, were off limits.[22] "Life was harsh enough for many Canadians during the years between the great wars without having cartoonists flailing the nation's social, economic and political shortcomings. Newspapers had no desire to aggravate problems that seriously threatened the stability of the country,"[23] – or, for that matter, their publishers' fortunes. Desbarats and Mosher single out Arch Dale of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, an affable cartoonist who was an excellent but apolitical artist and who relied on his editors to think up his ideas every morning, as evocative of this particularly "bland" period in the history of Canadian political cartooning.[24]

Bird's fifth press period, 1952 to present, is notable for the revolutionary changes in how newspapers operated and were produced from the arrival of computers in the newsroom to printing processes that enabled colourful graphics to accompany the news. It was also a period of intense competition, concentration of ownership and centralization of control. Though television, by late-century, spelt the end of the evening edition, the morning newspaper continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience in the face of competition from emerging media such as the radio, television and eventually the Internet. Reflecting the continuing trend toward urban migration – 77.9 per cent of

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid, 90-91.

Canadians lived in cities by 1996[25] – the total number of newspapers rose from 94 at mid-century to 114 in 2000. Also that year, daily circulation was at about 5.5 million, up from 3.5 million in the pre-television, pre-Internet year of 1951.[26] Accelerating a trend that began in the first half of the 1900s, Canadian newspapers were concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer owners – by mid-2000 six companies owned all but 12 of Canada's 114 daily newspapers, with half of all papers in the hands of two companies, Canwest Global and Quebecor.[27] Concerns that newspaper concentration and centralization of control might be harmful to democracy and the public interest inspired the creation of two government initiatives, in 1970 a special Senate Committee on Mass Media chaired by Senator Keith Davey and in 1980 a Royal Commission on Newspapers led by Tom Kent. Though both groups proposed plans to establish, in the media, a regulatory role for government, the Liberals, in power at the time, enacted none of these recommendations.[28].

Meanwhile, according to Desbarats and Mosher, the 1950s saw the rise of the most formidable generation of Canadian cartoonists culminating in the 1970s in a "golden age" of cartooning. In the 1950s, early rumblings of this blossoming of talent came, out West, from Len Norris's playfully satirical cartoons for the *Vancouver Sun*, and Quebec, where Robert LaPalme's irreverent assault on Premier Maurice Duplessis in *Le Devoir*, like early fissures, foreshadowed the Quiet Revolution that would shake the political foundations of the province the following decade.[29] Indeed, perhaps less than coincidentally, LaPalme's caricatures of the authoritarian Duplessis evoke the same spirit

[25] Hall, 13.
[26] Bird, 35.
[27] Ibid, 39-40.
[28] Ibid, 41.
[29] Desbarats and Mosher, 102.

of urgency, ferocity and single-mindedness that animate Mosher's caricatures of Mulroney in the later 1980s and early 90s.

It was Duncan Macpherson's arrival at the *Toronto Star* in 1958, however, that heralded an explosive era of Canadian cartooning beginning in the 1960s and dramatic changes in the identity and independence of the modern Canadian political cartoonist. Macpherson's wild, vicious and unpredictable cartoons were mirrored by his temperament, which helped him blaze a trail of editorial and financial independence in the newsroom as much as it hurt him in his frequent bouts of drinking and brawling.[30] A year into his first job at the *Toronto Star*, already the highest paid cartoonist in Canada, he threatened to leave unless his workload was reduced to three cartoons a week and he was allowed to travel to draw sketches for the newspaper.[31] His matter-of-fact negotiating style, and his insistence on working on contract rather than as staff reflected a growing awareness of the importance and popularity of a talented editorial cartoonist in the minds of newspaper readers, and set a precedent for other cartoonists who would, by the 1970s, be able to claim equivalent salaries, editorial independence, and journalistic status enjoyed by successful newspaper columnists.[32] Unlike in the first half of the century, the roughly 25 full-time editorial cartoonists working in the 1960s and 70s actually used their growing independence to raise serious issues from poverty, and gender inequality to racism. Still, the legacy of these cartoons is pegged to their entertainment-value rather than their record for bringing about social or political change.

It is this world of newspapers and cartooning that a headstrong 25-year-old walked into after graduating from a Quebec City art school in 1967. Political cartoonists were

[30] Ibid, 148-9.
[31] Ibid, 147-8.
[32] Ibid, 177.

valuable to publishers in so much as they could attract readers. In the grow or die arena of the fifth press period, cartoonists who could deliver readers began to achieve unprecedented power to make financial and editorial demands of their publishers. Political cartoonists were much more interested in entertaining and provoking readers, thereby increasing their status, than in exploring their more limited historical experience as political and social agitators. Cartoonists, no longer isolated in their newsrooms, fearing for their jobs, without reference points or a sense of their rights relative to the experience of other newspaper cartoonists, began to develop a sense of their place and importance in Canadian journalism. Strong cartoonists like Macpherson, Norris and LaPalme encouraged a mischievous and trenchant playfulness rather than dour preaching and for political cartoonists embracing the individualism of the sixties and seventies, the rascal's insolence was a much more comfortable fit than the pastors paternalism.

Despite cartoonists' understandable preoccupation with establishing their professional stability, a tradition of activism continued to lie uncomfortably in their history. What would it take for a cartoonist to take up a pen as though it were a sword, as Mosher did in 1988, or as LaPalme did in his ferocious assault on Premier Duplessis? Looking back at a few instances where North American cartoonists and their publishers sought to influence the social and political landscape around them, a compelling theory emerges to explain why a modern political cartoonist will make the extraordinary decision to break *the cartoonist's compromise.*

October 1902: the editors of the *Philadelphia North American* ask cartoonist Charles Nelan to caricature Gubernatorial candidate Judge Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker whose flourishing self-aggrandizing campaign rhetoric is laughably out of touch with the reality

that he is merely corrupt Pennsylvania Republican boss Matthew S. Quay's handpicked nominee. The resulting cartoon of Pennypacker as a parrot preening before a mirror, and those that follow, so enrage the soon-to-be governor that once in office his party railroads into law anti-libel legislation designed to intimidate publishers and editors from satirizing and caricaturing elected officials with the threat of personal legal recourse. The transparent attempt to muzzle Pennsylvania newspapers is never enforced and is repealed by the next administration in 1907 after public outcry grows national in scope. The right of the cartoonist to draw freely is not challenged again by government.[33]

August 1915: The first woman is hired as a full-time editorial cartoonist for a small but sprightly Ohio newpaper, the *Columbus Monitor.* Though her work is not signed until late November, during the pro-women's suffrage, pro-Republican newspaper's two-year life, Edwina Dumm draws cartoons on topics ranging from the war in Europe to state governance and most notably, women's suffrage. A month after the paper folds in July 1917, in an ordinance that carries by only 935 votes – enough to suggest the impact of Dumm's cartoons was a factor – Columbus voters give women voting rights in municipal elections.[34]

May 1919: Maritime booster, activist progressive reformer and newspaper baron William Henry Dennis hires Donald McRitchie as the first full-time editorial cartoonist at the pro-Tory *Halifax Herald.* McRitchie's cartoons take up Dennis' slogan of "Maritime Rights," a cry for federal help and attention in a region sliding into economic disaster as the federal and provincial Liberal governments sit on their hands. By election time in

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[33] Steven Piott. "The Right of the Cartoonist: Samuel Pennypacker and Freedom of the Press." *Pennsylvania History*, 55, no.2 (1988): 78-91.
[34] Lucy Shelton Caswell. "Edwina Dumm: Pioneer Woman Editorial Cartoonist, 1915-1917." *Journalism History*, 15, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 2-7.

1925, McRitchie's cartoons help bring about a Conservative landslide at the provincial level and stir Maritimers to send enough Tories to Ottawa to shrink William Lyon Mackenzie King's government to a minority and focus federal attention on the issue.[35]

July 1925: The American media descend upon the small Tennessee town of Dayton to report on the spectacular Scopes "Monkey Trial," whereby the first test of a state law prohibiting the teaching of evolution clashes against a first amendment challenge organized by eastern liberals looking to politicize the backward law. *Baltimore Sun* cartoonist Edmund Duffy's cartoons heap scorn and contempt upon the bigoted message of the pro-fundamentalists, advanced by high profile prosecutor William Jennings Bryan. Though the court rules against the 24-year-old biology teacher, John T. Scopes, the pro-evolution stance reached in the national public consciousness mirrors the stark logic of Duffy's cartoons.[36]

Four small examples of publishers and their cartoonists setting out to harness the incredible power of the comic image to influence the course of national history; four examples of the impact of that sustained and coherent effort being felt in the political life of a country. With historical lessons like these, it is no surprise that the "price" of editorial independence for Canadian cartoonists was taking on an identity built around their historical role as entertainers rather than their experience as activists.

Charles Press describes the role of the modern cartoonist critic in totalitarian, authoritarian and democratic societies. In a totalitarian or absolutist system, such as the former Soviet Union, the cartoon critic has no freedom to express his or her views or to

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[35]Margaret Conrad. "The Art of Regional Protest: The Political Cartoons of Donald McRitchie, 1904-1937," *Acadiensis*,. 21, no.1. (Autumn 1991): 5-29.
[36] S.L. Harrison. "The Scopes "Monkey Trial" Revisited: Mencken and the Editorial Art of Edmund Duffy." *Journal of American Culture*, 17, no.4 (1994): 55-63.

criticize the ruling political leadership, a leadership that endeavours to keep as tight a grip as possible upon the mechanisms of diffusing information to the masses.[37] In the authoritarian system, such as the colonial regime, the power of the political leadership is exerted over the political and economic establishment, but does not extend to the critics of its acts.[38] Here the cartoonist critic can express negative messages that are accepted by a significant enough number, including beneficiaries of government munificence, to create the possibility that the "mass of people can thus be led to take an independent course that will isolate the formal leaders."[39]

In the democratic society, Press writes, criticism is not only tolerated, it is protected and institutionalized by legal and social underpinning. "An assumption of democracy is that government cannot remain democratic without permitting the existence of such critics, independent of the government itself."[40] The system works, Press suggests, on the assumption that the critic will conclude he or she is quite fortunate to be a member of such a society and will decide it is deserving of loyalty. Overall, Press frowns on the notion of the democratic political cartoonist playing the role of visionary or activist, arguing instead they should be satisfied acting as a finger-pointer so that "everyone can get a glimmer of what is going on."[41]

But Press's interpretation of the role of the political cartoonist views these different types of societies as static categories and ignores the possibility that adopting an activist stance may be an act of loyalty in itself. What about when the cartoonist feels his or her "cherished community" – as Press calls the polity to which a cartoonist pledges his or her

[37] Charles Press. *The Political Cartoon*. London: Associated University Presses. 1981. 52.
[38] Press, 53-54.
[39] Ibid, 54.
[40] Ibid, 57.
[41] Press, 57.

loyalty – is threatened? Is the cartoonist excused from *the cartoonist's compromise* in those moments when they feel the entire body politic, indeed their very way of life, threatened by forces from within or without? Such a theory explains, perhaps, why LaPalme, disillusioned with the corrupt and iron-fisted rule of Duplessis[42] made it a personal mission to discredit the premier. Likewise, it explains Mosher's obsessive disparaging of a Prime Minster whose desperate desire to please the Americans, he feared would be the nation's downfall. In short, the political cartoonist, like any other human being whose freedoms are being trampled, or whose cherished community is threatened, will use the most powerful instrument of expression at their disposal to mount a sustained, coherent and systematic attack on the source of their oppression.

With great power comes great responsibility, goes the old adage. In yoking art, sense and humour in the creation of their prominently placed daily message, the political cartoonist's pen tip is always fluttering dangerously back and forth above the big red nuclear button of free expression. In art is the power to evoke emotion and pathos. In sense is the clout to appeal to reason. In humour is a passport to trespass every known boundary of the human social order such that the price of passage is a mere laugh. If a society's freedom can be judged by the latitude and volume of expression given to its most unpredictable voices, those most likely to hurl criticism at society's masters as at its servants, the political cartoonist's uncomfortable and yet sacrosanct status in the democratic psyche, as described eloquently by James D. Squires, can begin to be appreciated.

In this reading, *the cartoonist's compromise* becomes a trust bestowed upon the modern democratic cartoonist not to use their pulpit in an organized or systematic manner

[42] Desbarats and Mosher, 101.

unless they truly feel democratic society sliding back under authoritarian rule. The editorial page cartoon becomes a sort of democratic barometer with exceptional, courageous gestures of deviation from *the cartoonist's compromise* indicating blips in the democratic project or threats to the existence of a nation or its values. When everything is going smoothly, cartoonists relish their role as entertainers and rascals. Mosher's rhetoric and dedication to the principles of *the compromise* attest to this status quo attitude. But political cartoonists – particularly those like Mosher who cultivate their closeness to ordinary citizens – are exceptionally sensitive to the threats of a nation's political life. Thus, to stir Mosher to activism, the stink of authoritarianism, the perceived threat to his cherished community, must have felt very, very real. That even the nation's court jesters were beginning to lose their sense of humour is a searing indictment of the Mulroney government and it's modus operandi in selling free trade.

Chapter 3. "The Savage Darling of Canadian Radicals"

"I don't have this great pounding heart for my country. I'm not against it, but I just refuse to get on that Goddamn bandwagon. I find any form of nationalism suspect. I'm a great believer in the territorial imperative. I believe in that a hell of a lot more than I do in the House of Commons." – Terry Mosher, Maclean's *magazine, August, 27 1979.*

"The [best] preparation I had for being a political cartoonist wasn't art school, it was being on welfare."- Terry Mosher, Dec 1985.[1]

Figure 1 Mosher: gentle until tested.

Aislin, "Aislin (Self-Portrait)" Unpublished. Source: Aislin. *Stretch Marks: 15 Years of Aislin Cartoons.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1982. (no pagination.)

I. A Reluctant Radical

In the first sixteen years of his career, and in his formative years, there was little indication Mosher would one day draw a series of caricatures, packaging them in an anti-free trade pamphlet, to try to bring down a Prime Minister he believed was selling away his country's independence. The preoccupations of his first decade or so cartooning – building a reputation for savagery at the drawing board

[1] McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3671 "Press Clippings, 1985." (*The Sherbrooke Record.* Dec. 20, 1985.)

and away from it, studying the history of his profession, experimenting stylistically, and consolidating his job security and success – speak to a political cartoonist more interested in establishing his career than acting as a guardian of Canadian sovereignty. "I don't have this great pounding heart for my country," Mosher said in a 1979 interview for *Maclean's*, adding that he considered all forms of nationalism suspect.[2] Though he downplayed the change, this attitude altered dramatically by the end of the 1980s.

While *Chatlaine* in 1978 dubbed him the "savage darling of Canadian radicals," "radical" was not a label he wore comfortably. By 1979, Mosher was living in a Westmount row house in Montreal with his wife, two daughters, eight cats and a dog. He earned $50,000 a year to produce, like Macpherson had, three cartoons a week, ten months a year, for *The Gazette.*[3] He spent his summers vacationing in Maine with his family. He was an avid Expos fan. Drugs and alcohol were still a problem, fuelling riotous late night outings. Ultimately, the cartoonist was more interested in agitating for his rights in the newsroom than making waves in the House of Commons. Mosher has considered it a point of pride that, unlike many other cartoonists, he never showed an editor a cartoon until it was done. His contract allowed him to publish, in anthologies, any cartoons rejected by his editors, and the marketing-savvy cartoonist had already released four collections of his work. For his editors, Mosher's cartoons were presented without compromise, take it or leave it, unless Mosher considered a suggestion – a label on a lesser known official, for example – innocuous enough to grant without flying into a rage.[4]

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[2] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/47-3663 "Press Clippings, 1979."
[3] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/47-3663 "Press Clippings, 1979."
[4] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03.

Born in Ottawa in 1942, Mosher grew up in Ontario. His father, a journalist, moved the family to Toronto soon after Mosher was born. There, Mosher grew up and studied some art in high school before he was expelled, at age 17, for an incident involving marijuana.[5] For three years, he hitchhiked across Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, much of it with a friend, teaching himself to draw, sketching portraits and landscapes to support himself.[6] After his trip, Mosher enrolled in the École des Beaux-Arts in Quebec City, forging his high school diploma to secure his acceptance.[7] Explains Mosher: "They said, yeah, we're going to put you in third year, you draw really well. Just bring in your high school diploma. I'd been thrown out of high school, so I went home and I drew it."[8] Sketching portraits in the summer time on Quebec City's Rue du Trésor to finance his tuition, Mosher found his calling as a caricaturist after an American tourist from Boston asked him to draw a sketch of American President Lyndon Johnson. Mosher had recently met and married his wife, Carol Devlin, and signed his work "Aislin," after the couple's first daughter, thinking he would keep his real name for his serious painting.

Instead, Mosher soon abandoned painting and began dedicating himself to political cartooning, keeping with the alias.[9] "I had a museum show while I was [at school] in Quebec [City], but I realized at that time I preferred doing caricature and have not painted since," he explained in 1969.[10] Mosher graduated in spring 1967, and his family settled in Montreal some time shortly after that. In the fall, Mosher hitchhiked to New York and managed to get some work published in the magazine *Cheetah*, which,

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[5] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds,* P090 – C/47-3652 "Press Clippings, 1969."
[6] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds,* P090 – C/47-3652 "Press Clippings, 1969."
[7] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds,* P090 – C/48-3671 "Press Clippings, 1985."
[8] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03.
[9] Mosher signed his real name only for a brief period in 1975. McCord Museum Archives. *Aislin Fonds,* P090 – C/48-3668 "Press Clippings, 1983." (*Target: The Political Cartoon Quarterly*, Summer, 1983."Outrage on Tap: The art of Aislin." 19.)
[10] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/47-3652 "Press Clippings, 1969."

helped him upon his return to sell cartoons to *Saturday Night*, student and underground publications such as *Logos,* and eventually the *Montreal Star.*[11] Mosher soon turned his December 11, 1967 *coup de grâce* into a paid job drawing editorial cartoons for the *Montreal Star,* a paper that was then, as he put it, "shopping for a few oddballs that could meet a deadline."[12] In 1972 Mosher left the *Star* for the "poorer but livelier" *Gazette* where he has worked ever since.[13]

Throughout the 1970s, *The Gazette*, a morning paper, and the *Montreal Star*, an afternoon paper, fought a battle to death for Montreal's Anglophone readers. This newspaper war was symptomatic of the aggressive competition between big circulation dailies in Canada's large cities during this era, but in this case was exacerbated by the exodus of English Montrealers in the wake of the October Crisis and 1976 Parti Québécois provincial election victory. The struggle came to a head after a debilitating eight-month pressman's strike at the *Star* in 1978 cost the newspaper tens of thousands of subscribers. *The Gazette* greeted the return of its competitor

Figure 2 This Aislin cartoon provoked outrage from readers when published in *Maclean's* in February 1970.

Aislin, "The Queen and Leaf." Published *The McGill Daily* April, 1969. Source: Desbarats, Peter and Terry Mosher. *The Hecklers: A History of Canadian Political Cartooning and a Cartoonists' History of Canada.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. 1979. 7. (Cartoon later published in *Maclean's,* February 1970 and in Britain's *Punch*, September 15, 1971.

[11] Desbarats and Mosher, 7.
[12] Aislin, 1991,10.
[13] Ibid, 10.

with news it would be introducing an afternoon edition to deny its rival's afternoon monopoly. Later that same day, the *Star* announced it would begin publishing a morning edition. Early in 1979, in an aggressive bid to win back lost subscribers, the *Star* began poaching *Gazette* by-lines and in February even Mosher mused with the idea of jumping ships until a friend persuaded him to stay. By mid-march, however, *The Gazette* was holding its daily circulation at 175,000 – up from 110,000 before the *Star* strike – while the *Star* was thought to be hovering around 100,000, though management claimed a much higher tally. Later in the year, the *Star* would fold. Mosher had bet on the winning horse.[14]

In the mid-1970s Mosher had also considered leaving Montreal for the United States, where he could build on his already considerable success. But he decided to stay because of the growing excitement and uncertainty of events in Canada, and the strong state of Canadian cartooning.[15] "In about 1975-76, I was

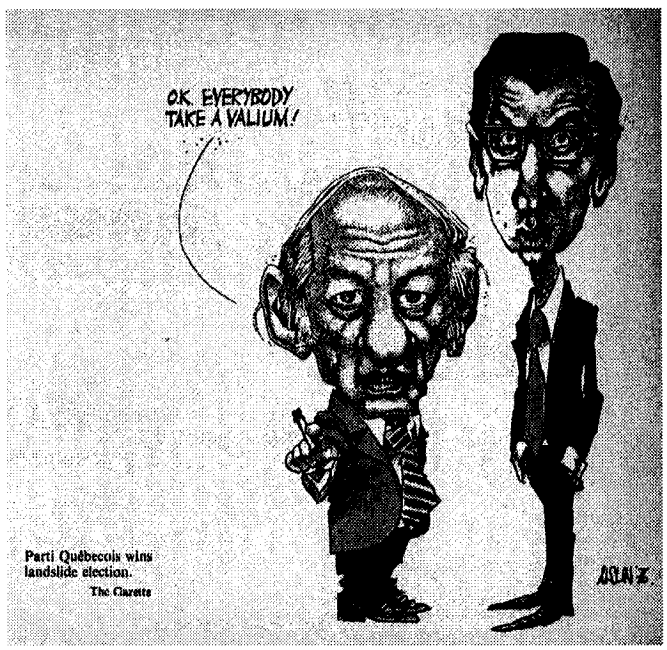

Figure 3 This cartoon greeted news of the Parti Québécois' landslide victory in 1976 – one that sent tremors of fear throughout English Montreal.

Aislin, "O.K. Everybody Take a Valium!" Published November 16, *The Gazette*, 1976. Source: Aislin. *Stretch Marks: 15 Years of Aislin Cartoons.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1982. (No pagination.)

[14] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/47-3663 "Press Clippings, 1979." (*Macleans*, March 26, 1979. "Front page challenge: suddenly, it's for real.")
[15] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03.

thinking of going to the United States, but then the election of the PQ, working on *The Hecklers*, ...and seeing how strong a Duncan Macpherson was compared to the American cartoonists [changed my mind]."[16] Mosher has called 1976 was a "watershed" year in his career, marked by the election of the Parti Québécois and a sense that he was beginning to be recognized as an authoritative Quebec political cartoonist.[17]

Quebec Premier René Lévesque, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau: Mosher's early success was as much a product of his talent as it was the colourful personalities that animated the Canadian political landscape that was his palette. Mosher captured the enigmatic Trudeau – at once the disco-going playboy of Trudeaumania and steely-eyed signatory to the War Measures Act – most notably in his 1971 cartoon, "The Swinger." Desbarats, in *The Hecklers*, called the cartoon of Trudeau as a scowling "simian swinger," "the most savage caricature ever published of the former Prime Minister and [it] seems likely to haunt his reputation forever."[18] The cartoon brought Mosher accolades winning the International Salon of Cartoons and Caricature Award for 1971, the highest honour of the annual celebration of political cartooning organized by Robert LaPalme.

Figure 4 Trudea is "The Swinger"

Aislin, "The Swinger." Published *The Last Post*, 1971. Source: Aislin. *Stretch Marks: 15 Years of Aislin Cartoons.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1982. (No pagination.)

[16] Interview with Mosher. 11/09/03.
[17] Ibid, 11/09/03.
[18] Desbarats and Mosher, 190.

Unlike the dynamic and charismatic Trudeau, Drapeau offered Mosher an easy target. The mayor's stubborn and ambitious pursuit of an Olympic face-lift for Montreal in the years leading up to the 1976 Olympics, despite spiralling costs, earned him much ridicule at Mosher's hand. But it was the ideologue Lévesque who Mosher had most fun caricaturing. "Fiery and emotional, Lévesque was a joy to draw. After the PQ election... newspapers all around the world wanted cartoons to illustrate Quebec stories. Lévesque may have scared some Anglos to points west, but he tripled my income."[19]

Temperamental and self-absorbed, thin-skinned and short of stature, Mosher took to drawing Lévesque as something akin to a petulant child, quite often susceptible to the tot-like penchant for blissfully oblivious nudity. "A politician with a cause seldom has a sense of humour about himself. Lévesque is a classic illustration of this and that's one reason why he's one of my favourite targets," explained Mosher in

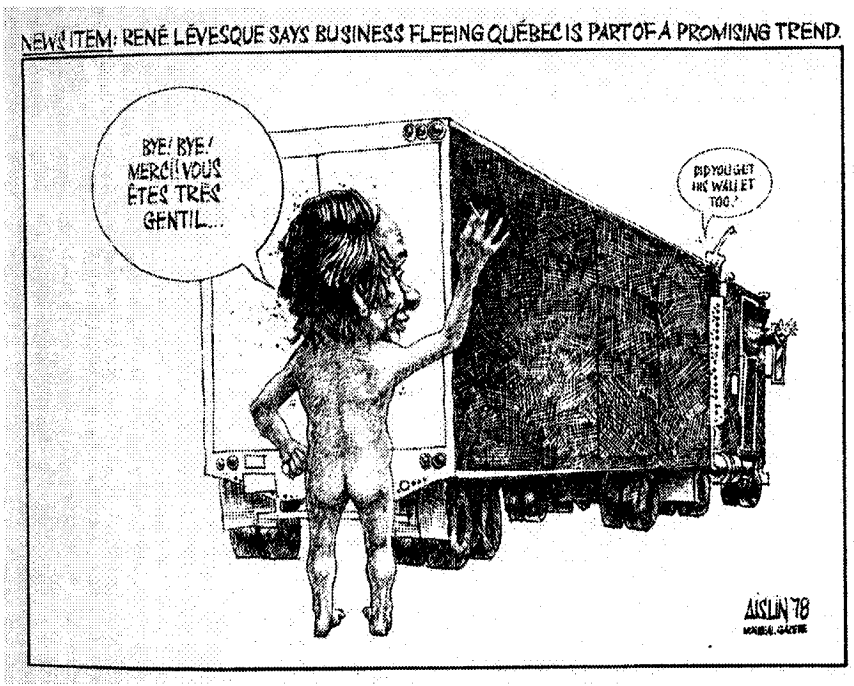

Figure 5 Mosher: "Fiery and emotional, Lévesque was a joy to draw."

Aislin, "René Lévesque – Business Fleeing Quebec." Published *The Gazette* February 7, 1978. Source: Aislin. *Stretch Marks: 15 Years of Aislin Cartoons.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1982. (No pagination.)

[19] Aislin, 1991. 9.

1979.[20]. This inability to laugh at himself was apparent when Lévesque, on a tour of a plant in the early eighties, tore down an Aislin caricature of depicting him as Boy George. "I got to him and that's a good feeling. If I can really irritate the politicians from time to time, then I'm doing my job," Mosher said in 1985.[21]

Next to his lively caricatures, it was Mosher's work on *The Hecklers* that propelled him to the front of the pack of working editorial cartoonists. Mosher's historical interest in political cartooning was sparked after a Canada Council-sponsored trip to Europe to study editorial cartooning in the early 1970s. Upon his return, he quickly discovered there was no documentation on the subject in Canada and began researching cartoons with Desbarats, eventually publishing *The Hecklers* seven years later.[22] Together, Desbarats and Mosher assembled and reviewed a collection of over 800,000 political cartoons, which were later donated to the National Archives in Ottawa. For Mosher, the project catapulted him into prominence as a knowledgeable and articulate spokesperson for the profession. National media interest in the project remained high well into 1980, stoked at first by a "mishap" in which an inappropriate cartoon inadvertently made it into the publication, requiring the first batch of texts to be recalled. The cartoon, intended to illustrate relations between Quebec and the federal government, depicted a small, terrified frog with a large vibrator marked "Souvenir of Ottawa." According to the publisher of McClelland and Stewart, a nationally syndicated *Canadian Press* story explained, the company's production manager discovered the drawing when he was editing the proofs. "He stopped the presses but some foul-up occurred. I think

[20] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/47-3663 "Press Clippings, 1979"
[21] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3671 "Press Clippings, 1985"
[22] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3668 "Press Clippings, 1983." (*Target: The Political Cartoon Quarterly*, Summer 1983, 18."Outrage on Tap: The art of Aislin.")

Aislin and some of our designers were having fun"[23] Mosher's work on *The Heckler's* was significant in confirming in Mosher's mind the distinct and important role of the political cartoonist in Canadian history, and may have played a role in awakening his sense of nationalism.

Mosher also sought to innovate as a cartoonist during his first decade or so of cartooning. Mosher discovered that his caricature style – big heads on little bodies; a photographic surrealism brought on by the cross-hatching drawing technique he used – could be manipulated to connote the televised image. "In this age of television we spend hours looking at people's eyes and faces. The cartoon seems to have more impact the more you concentrate on the face," Mosher explained in 1979. "The secondary jokes are reserved for body movements and outfits. Then comes the wording, the captions."[24] Realizing that television was changing how people looked at other human beings – focusing their attention on a person's head and shoulders – Mosher squared the borders of his cartoons to recreate a TV shape. He surrounded his caricatures

Figure 6 Mosher's caricature of President Reagan was heavily influenced by the medium of television.

Aislin,"Yo Momma!" Source: *What's The Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade.* Text by Rick Salutin; cartoons by Aislin. Ottawa: Pro-Canada Network.1988, published October 10, 1988.

[23] McCord Museum Archives. *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/47-3663 "Press Clippings, 1979."
[24] McCord Museum Archives. *Aislin Fonds,* P090 – C/47-3663 "Press Clippings, 1979."

with an abundance of white space to "draw the eye to what [he] wanted to express in the highly detailed front view of the face."[25] More often then not Mosher's caricatures would face the reader, the same way a TV anchor does, because, he explained, human beings relate to eye contact, whether real or not. "We are comfortable looking at, and even studying, people in this TV-style format. When we take snapshots of one another, they are in general frontal shots or heads and shoulders. Newspaper and Magazine photographers have us look at people this way, too. It made sense to bring this familiarity to my presentation of cartoons."[26]

Besides the obvious emphasis on the image, Mosher increasingly composed his cartoons to reflect and relate to the medium of television. For example, over time, he adapted his cartoons to the television attention span, preferring to limit the amount of text he incorporated into this cartoons, and ultimately how much time the newspaper reader would have to invest before understanding the cartoon. Mosher even arranged the elements of his cartoon according to the eye's trajectory across the television screen – starting in the upper left hand corner and moving directly across then down the screen in an arc.

By fusing the political cartoon with the ubiquitous televised image Mosher harnessed the potency of both mediums creating a cartoon worldscape that blended eerily with the nightly news. The distortions of the camera, meanwhile, such as the tendency for heads to seem freakishly large on screen, echoed the morning's Aislin caricatures. In watching television as a source of material, Mosher was able to draw from the pool of images that shaped the majority of Canadians' impressions of their leaders. "Television

[25] Aislin, 1991. 60.
[26] Ibid, 60.

news is a must, but not for hard information. What interests me on TV is not what the politicians are saying – I can read that in tomorrow's newspaper – but how they look saying it."[27] Mosher's pioneering sensibility would later lead him, as the Internet rose to prominence, to begin composing his cartoons to acknowledge the vertical scroll of the growing number of readers who accessed his cartoons online.[28]

Another stylistic trait Mosher developed from his earliest caricatures onward was the signature dandruff specks that rise, like fairy dust, from the heads of all his subjects. "Dandruff is the great equalizer," explained Mosher in 1979. "You see a drawing of a guy with little dots all around him and you can't help but see the guy as human, seedy, suspect."[29] Our political leaders, though they sometimes forget, are no different from us. "I comment on frailties which I have myself. Which all of us have. I remind readers that the people who run our lives are human."[30] Mosher himself would endeavour to stay remote from both politicians and the newsroom so that he could remain tough on those he drew while staying relevant to his readership. He also paid close attention to the reactions his cartoons generated. "The cartooning that goes on here [in Montreal], throughout history, has been part of the process, part of the talk on the street. They talk about it on the radio, commentators going back and forth, and you get reaction. And it's better here in Montreal than anywhere else."[31]

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[27] Aislin, 1991. 19.
[28] Interview with Mosher, 09/11/03.
[29] McCord Museum Archives: P090 – C/47-3663 "Press Clippings, 1979."
[30] McCord Museum Archives: P090 – C/48-3667 "Press Clippings, 1982."
[31] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03.

Mosher recognized, protected and cultivated a closeness to the average newspaper reader. Throughout his career, Mosher kept his distance from the newsroom preferring at stages to work from home, in an office building next to *The Gazette*, and, eventually, carefully cloistered in an office on a floor separate from the newsroom, checking in only to keep tabs on the day's emerging top story. To this day he unplugs his phone to work. It is no coincidence he often began each workday poring over newspapers in a coffee shop, eavesdropping patrons' conversations as they discussed the news of the day. "What's most important is the Buzz – how non-insiders feel about everyday events," Mosher has noted. "One of the oddities of this job is that being too well informed is not necessarily a good thing. It's better to be frustrated and cursed by politics, as many readers are, and to express those feelings for them."[32]

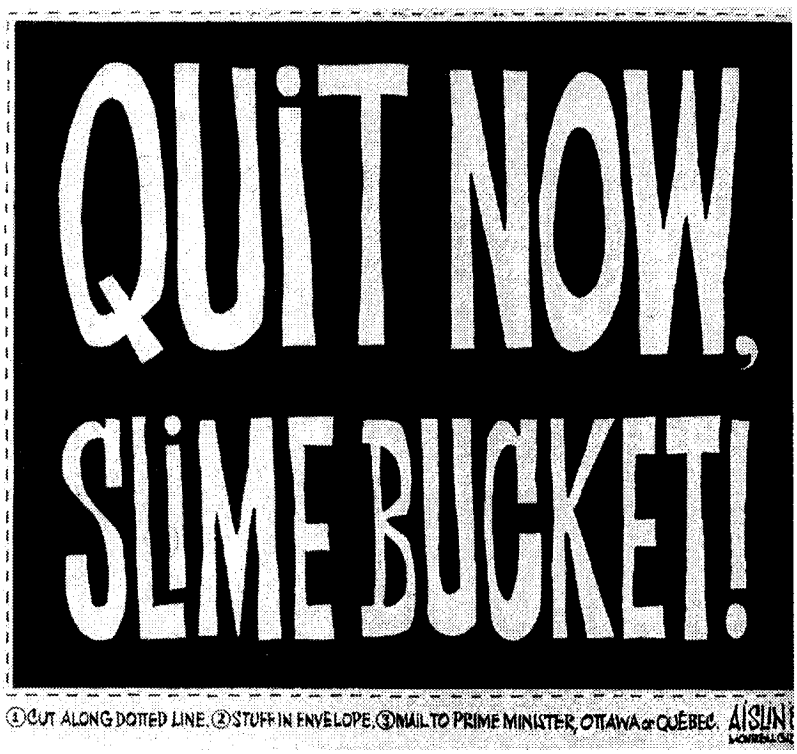

Figure 7 A not-so-subtle hint to Lévesque and Trudeau.

Aislin, "Quit Now, Slime Bucket!" Published *The Gazette*, September 10, 1983. Source: Aislin. *Where's the Trough? And Other Aislin Cartoons*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1985. (No pagination.)

[32]Aislin, 1991, 19.

For example, a provocative 1983 cartoon calling for Trudeau and Lévesque to resign – "Quit Now, Slime Bucket!" it read plainly, alongside the suggestion to cut and send to either leader's office – was inspired when, sitting in a tavern, patrons on one side of Mosher were complaining about Trudeau, and another group was slamming Lévesque on the other.[33] Countless cartoons were similarly inspired. By staying "in touch" and nurturing a connectedness to the concerns and attitudes of the average reader, Mosher was able to create cartoons that tapped into the powerful emotional reservoir of the populist sentiments of the day. Mosher's studious effort to maintain both reverence and access to this reservoir was a key ingredient in the enduring success of his cartoons.

A decade into his career, Mosher was sticking firmly to *the cartoonist's compromise*. His devilish caricatures of leaders like Trudeau, Lévesque and Drapeau were more playfully mischievous than mean-spirited or designed to overthrow. Even his later, not-so-subtle cartoon hint to Lévesque and Trudeau was an attempt to summarize the "buzz" he was hearing around him. Absent from his work was the passionate didacticism of Bengough – in fact, Mosher has said it was with great relief that he early on realized that he did not have to be angry, so much as a mischief-maker. His angriest cartoons tended to be wordy and preachy, a trait he later realized would only lose him readers impatient for their morning chuckle. He demonstrated no patriotic fervour. His attitude toward nationalism was best summed up in two of his cartoons. The first, a caricature entitled "The Quebec nationalist," drawn in the mid 1970s but which was not published in *The Gazette*, depicted a naked man, contorted, with his faced pressed against his buttocks, or, "disappearing up his ass" as Mosher starkly put it.[34] The cartoon

[33] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03.
[34] McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/47-3662 "Press Clippings, 1978."

unapologetically portrayed Quebec nationalist aspirations as futile.[35] The other cartoon, published in *Today* magazine in the early 1980s as part of a series called "Aislin's Canadians," meant to poke fun at ordinary Canadians, depicted "Ernie Carlisle – Canadian Nationalist," looking ridiculous with the Grey Cup on his head and a volume of Stephen Leacock under his arm. Carlisle, a Gladyard, New Brunswick gas station attendant is shown reading Margaret Atwood *Coles Notes* and sipping on Canadian sherry at a Fina pump. A caption beside the caricature suggests he is temporarily under the spell of Canadian nationalism but will soon return to his place in the pub drinking Carlsberg beer and betting on NFL games.[36]

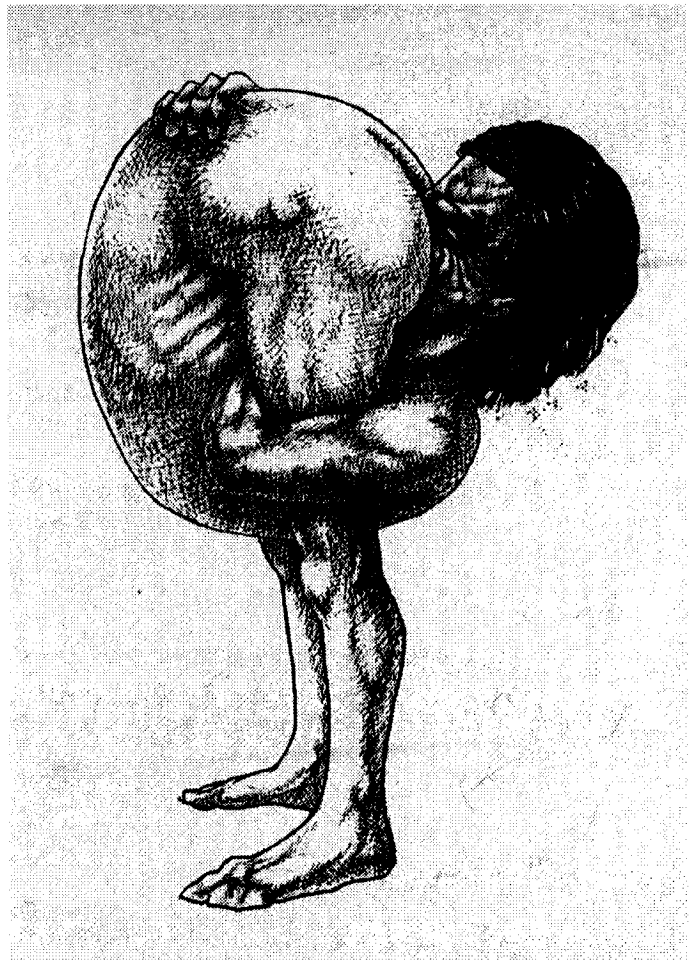

Figure 8 The Quebec Nationalist

Aislin, "The Quebec Nationalist." Unpublished. 1975. Source: Aislin. *Stretch Marks: 15 Years of Aislin Cartoons.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1982. (No pagination.)

Whether treating it

[35] Aislin, 1982. "The Québec Nationalist."
[36] McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, P090-A/20-1650. "Aislin's Canadians: Ernie Carlisle – 'Canadian Nationalist'" Pub. Today Magazine, June 27, 1981.

with outright disdain or playful mockery, Mosher saw nationalism, early in his career, as an unhealthy form of certainty of conviction. What happened, then, that in a few short years Mosher would join the ranks of such strident Canadian nationalists as playwright and humourist Rick Salutin, investigative journalist Adrienne Clarkson, and Council of Canadians chief Maude Barlow, in a passionate defence of Canadian sovereignty against American encroachment? The answer, of course, is that Mulroney happened.

To be fair, in hindsight, Mulroney was the Canadian lightning rod for frustration at a rapidly changing world in 1988. Neo-conservative governments had come to power in Great Britain in 1979 under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher and in 1981 in the United States under Ronald Reagan. Academics were beginning to identify a worldwide phenomenon they dubbed "globalization."[37] These, and other governments were touting the benefits of an increasingly economically interdependent world, and chastising those who would be left behind in the new, highly competitive, globalized marketplace. Trudeau's Liberals had, in the early 1980s, failed miserably in their efforts to use protectionist measures to insulate Canada from these forces of change. Canada was genuinely at a crossroads, whether Canadians liked it or not, and these international circumstances were bringing the force of global change to bear on the greatest of Canadian insecurities: Canadian economic, political and cultural sovereignty in the North American continent.

By the time Mulroney came to power in 1984 Canadians had had plenty of opportunity to watch right-wing governments in action. But when Mulroney's Tories swept into power with the second largest majority in Canadian history in September

[37] Duffy, 318.

1984, it was with the promise of change and Canadians were ready and optimistic.[38] Mosher was not among those swept up. Mulroney had none of the force of will of Prime Minister Thatcher or aw shucks, grandfatherly reassurance of President Reagan, not that he preferred either of them. Mosher felt he saw right through Mulroney, and what he saw scared him: "Tall, friendly... By definition, Mulroney should have been a disaster for cartoonists," wrote Mosher in 1991. "In fact, cartooning him is a piece of cake – he is almost too easy to ridicule. Why? Because Trudeau and Lévesque demanded our respect. Mulroney begs for it."[39]

It was, unlike any Prime Minister before him, Mulroney's eagerness to please the Americans that ignited Mosher's outright distaste for him:

> ...I'm not your typical anti-American agitator. I have the usual middle-class Canadian attitudes about the United States. But I am aware that if I want to remain Canadian, someone has to keep me from eating too much tempting stuff from the American candy store. We've always had strong leaders who not only held Americans at arm's length, but also pulled Canadians back from temptation. But, today, the problem is this: Brian's working behind the counter.[40]

Mosher's opinion of Mulroney was not one rushed to judgement, either. Married into Quebec City's Irish community and living in the same city as Mulroney when the future Prime Minister studied at Laval University in the mid-1960s, Mosher had heard from time to time about the "boy wonder" nicknamed "Bones."[41] He had long been a good friend of Mulroney's brother, Gary. Coincidence would take Mosher and the future

[38] Duffy, 308-9.
[39] Aislin, 1991. 10.
[40] Ibid, 78.
[41] Ibid, 10.

Prime Minister on different paths but in similar locales for the next twenty-five years.[42] From his first stab at the leadership of the Progressive Conservatives in 1976 Mosher caricatured Mulroney's political career. While Mosher parodied the battling Tory leadership contenders as wrestlers, Mulroney wracked up a respectable third-place finish at the convention. When Mulroney took the Tory crown in 1983, Mosher drew him as a basketball player – with a brassiere holding up his enormous chin. "I love what those guys do to my chin," Mulroney was heard commenting a few days before the cartoon was drawn. Naturally, Mosher could not resist testing how thick Mulroney's skin really was.[43]

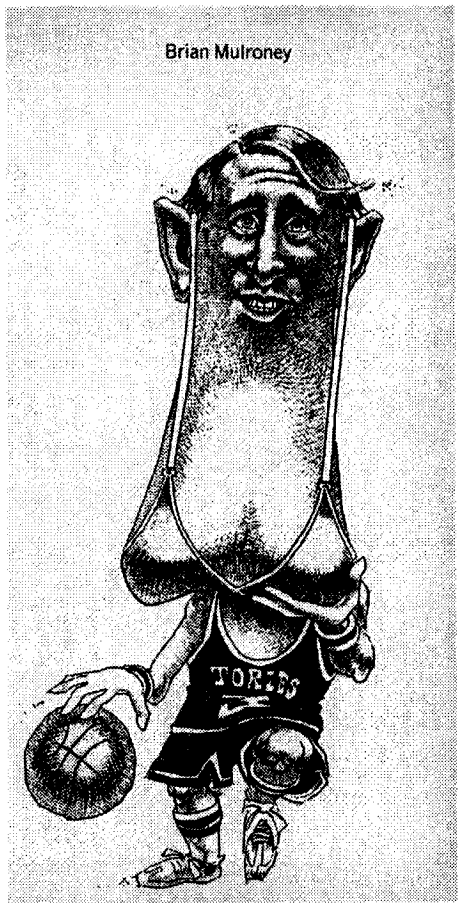

Figure 9 Mosher pulled no punches in his caricatures of the Conservative Prime Minister.

Aislin, "Mulroney – Bra." Published *The Gazette,* April 28, 1983. Source: Aislin. *Where's the Trough? And Other Aislin Cartoons.* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1985. (No pagination.)

Meanwhile, as Mosher was doing his best to test Mulroney's sense of humour, the rest of English Montreal's political class and intelligentsia, caught up in the Tory-mania of 1983-84,were fawning over the new Conservative leader. The situation no doubt reinforced Mosher's instinctively suspicious inclination toward the rising political star. Mosher scratched his head in wonderment as

[42] Aislin, 1991. Preface.
[43] Ibid, 17.

his good friend Nick Auf der Maur, boulevardier, city councillor and erstwhile 1984 Tory candidate, co-wrote a biography of Mulroney called *The Boy From Baie-Comeau.*[44] Where previously one Tory Member of Parliament from Quebec had sat in the House of Commons, suddenly 54 Conservatives were representing La Belle Province to Ottawa. "Who were these people?" Mosher mused.[45]

Mosher's suspicions of Mulroney were, of course, well grounded historically. Mosher knew that following his 1976 leadership bid, Mulroney had, while working for Iron Ore, closed down its plants in the small Quebec town of Schefferville, a community much like Mulroney's native Baie-Comeau, at the behest of the American company.[46] When, at a 1985 Summit, Mulroney and Reagan joined together onstage to sing a rendition of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling," Mosher did not miss the

Figure 10 Mosher's cartoons of Mulroney grew more personal and antagonistic, as the free trade issue loomed larger.

Aislin, "Great Moments in the History of Free Trade." Published in *The Gazette,* January 5, 1988. Source: Aislin. *Drawing Bones: My 15 years of Cartooning Brian Mulroney.* Toronto: Key Porter Books Ltd., 1991. 81.

[44] Aislin, 1991. 27.
[45] Ibid, 29.
[46] Ibid, 84.

obvious parallel to the Baie-Comeau lore of Mulroney's younger years, which told of Mulroney singing songs to please the American bosses who ran the town's industry.[47] It was at this summit that Mulroney announced that, contrary to comments he had made during his 1983 leadership campaign, the Conservative government would work together with the Americans to fashion a free trade deal.[48]

At first, Mosher did not take the announcement very seriously. He was reminded of the hysterical political cartoons of 1911, the most recent instance when free trade with the United States was proposed, and an election was fought and lost over the issue. "Imagery reflected the sentimental morality of the time – fair damsels threatened by fat leering American men with terrible teeth. Free Trade hadn't passed then and seemed unrealistic in 1985."[49]

From the point of view of Canadian political history, the record supported Mosher's presumption that a free trade election victory in 1988 was unlikely. The Liberals, under Wilfrid Laurier, running on free trade platforms in both the 1891 and 1911 elections had been soundly defeated at the polls. Macdonald, in 1891, had been able to exploit fears of American assimilation to turn the heat up on Laurier's Liberals, and in the process, take the spotlight off his own crumbling government.[50] In 1911, Laurier's assessment that the young nation was finally psychologically secure enough to enter into a favourable trade "reciprocity" arrangement with the United States was ultimately a miscalculation.[51] Liberal Prime Minister Mackenzie King had toyed with the idea of a

[47] Aislin, 1991. 84.
[48] Duffy, 316.
[49] Aislin, 1991. 84.
[50] Duffy, 26.
[51] Ibid, 92.

free trade deal with the United States in 1953 but, recalling Laurier, opted against it.[52] Prime Minister Diefenbaker was, in considerable part, defeated at the polls in February 1963 for having appeared to concede to American demands to place nuclear warheads on Canadian soil.[53] And in the 1970s and early 1980s, the governing Liberals, under Trudeau, had veered left, adopting an anti-U.S., anti-big business posture that made closer economic ties with the United States unthinkable, winning election after election in the process. When the Tories positioned themselves as the pro-business, allies of the U.S., in the 1980s, it was very much an imponderable question whether the Canadian public would finally sign onto some form of economic treaty with the U.S.[54] What the Tories did not foresee was that the prospect of free trade would unleash a century of pent-up anxiety about the durability of Canadian sovereignty in the face of American manifest destiny – economic and otherwise. Mosher was but one of millions of Canadians whose silent *Canadian-ness* would be unlocked by the passionate call to arms of a debate that seemed to ask each citizen, in casting a vote, to define the very nation's soul.

But this development cut even deeper for Mosher, who was watching Mulroney as closely perhaps as the nations top political reporters. The announcement of Mulroney's free trade deal tapped into narrative of deceit, arrogance, and approbatory addiction, particularly for American applause, that Mosher had been plotting the Prime Minister into, in his mind, for some time. As every day he watched, and mocked, the Conservative Prime Minister, his democratic barometer registered another disturbing reading. Free trade was his breaking point.

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[52] Duffy, 317.
[53] Spencer, 2003. 2.
[54] Duffy, 316.

Yet Mulroney did not come to power intending to implement a Canada-U.S. trade deal – the idea had come from within the government bureaucracy.[55]. Before free trade became a central issue for the Tories, Mulroney's government was without focus, hopelessly mired in scandal and facing an increasingly hostile electorate. After a relatively quiet first year in power, the calm was ruined by "black September," as Mosher called the month in which a CBC investigation revealed to Canadians that the government was responsible for releasing hundreds of thousands of tins of spoiled Tuna.[56] Canadians saw Mulroney at his worst as, at first, the Prime Minster tried to stand by his Fisheries Minister and then fired him when it was clear such posturing would not work.[57] The scandal seemed to break open the floodgates to reveal a government awash in corruption and malfeasance. With offences ranging from liaisons with a stripper to profiteering from a defence contract, by the end of his first mandate, eight of Mulroney's 38 cabinet colleagues had resigned in disgrace, leaving the Canadian public severely disillusioned with a government that had once promised change.[58] The price of renewal, for Mulroney, a politician who built a winning coalition – Quebec and the West – around the promise of power, was the very excesses of patronage and regional pork barrelling that he had decried to get elected.[59]

[55] Duffy, 316.
[56] Aislin, 1991. 39.
[57] Ibid, 1991. 39.
[58] Duffy, 314.
[59] Ibid, 314.

While free trade had proven itself in the past to be a set of concrete shoes at the polls, for Mulroney it was a life preserver on which to float his re-election hopes.[60] In free trade, Mulroney saw an issue that could demonstrate his leadership and vision.[61] With the Liberal's protectionist policies from the early 1980s discredited, Mulroney argued that Canada could no longer hide from global and U.S. competition in the emerging world economy. Liberal and New Democratic Party opposition argued such a deal would mean economic subservience at first, and soon after, Canadian political assimilation into the American behemoth.[62] Over October 3 and 4, 1987 Canadian and U.S. negotiators hammered out the final terms of the trade agreement setting the stage for a dramatic conflict.

Figure 11 Mosher's September 1984 cartoon foreshadowed the patronage problems that would later plague Mulroney's government.

Aislin, "I.O.U. Brian," Published *The Gazette,* September 12, 1984. Source: Aislin. *Drawing Bones: My 15 years of Cartooning Brian Mulroney.* Toronto: Key Porter Books Ltd., 1991. 31.

[60] Duffy, 316.
[61] Ibid, 316.
[62] Ibid, 318.

Mosher's own stance on free trade mirrored the mistrust that had grown everywhere toward the Mulroney government. It is as though in deciding upon his most overt political act, Mosher fell back on his inspirational inkwell – his closeness to the average Canadian. "My rule of thumb in cartooning is this: If I don't understand an issue, the public probably doesn't either," he wrote in 1991. "What was really pissing me off was that (a) these guys were all cowabunga on free trade, and (b) none of them bothered to explain it in terms simple enough for me, and probably most Canadians, to understand... I found I wanted to do something a little more than just a few tart and punchy cartoons on an editorial page. So I did."[63] "This was not just everyday cynical irritation, I was really pissed off."[64]

Mosher's reaction was sincere and emotional. But it may well have been intellectually informed as well. Mosher had noted, a decade earlier, in *The Hecklers*, that fear of American encroachment, assimilation and even annexation has been one of the most enduring themes of Canadian political cartooning, predating the 1911 and 1891 free trade election battles, outstretching even Confederation. Historian David R. Spencer called anti-Americanism, "one of the dominant political and cultural values of Victorian Canada."[65] The suggestion exists, Spencer noted, that Confederation was the product of fear in Upper and Lower Canada that once the American South was subdued in the Civil War, the Yankee armies would turn northward to fulfil the promise of American manifest destiny.[66] Having studied, in the 1970s, the political cartoons that debated these

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[63] Aislin, 1991. 86.
[64] Ibid. 85.
[65] Spencer, 2003. 16.
[66] Ibid. Spencer points to Seymour Martin Lipset. *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (Toronto and Washington: C.D. Howe Institute and National Planning Association, 1990), p. 43.

questions, Mosher might well have felt the spirit of Bengough, Julien and others, beckoning him into the fray.

As early as 1849, John Henry Walker, the publisher and illustrator of *Punch in Canada,* drew cartoons illustrating the struggle to keep the American eagle at bay.[67] Throughout the period, two characters emerged to symbolize the neighbouring nations. One, "Brother Jonathan,"[68] symbolizing the United States, was the sometimes loafing, sometimes scheming, ingrate son of Canada's portly British protector, John Bull.[69] Meanwhile, "Miss Canada," a demure young maiden often in need of protection from American advances, or less often, "Johnny Canuck," a vigorous young man, played the part of the young Canadian nation.[70]

In the early post-confederation years, Canada was being led in one direction by protectionists like Macdonald's Tories who believed that only by erecting strong tariff barriers could Canada protect itself from American ideological and economic incursions. Meanwhile, the Liberals took the other tack. Liberal leaders Alexander Mackenzie and, later, Wilfrid Laurier argued that only the economic benefits of closer economic ties with the United States would buttress Canada to protect its sovereignty.[71] Cartoonists were key players in framing this national debate. Taking up on each side of the issue, suspicion of American intentions was the only point on which all parties – and cartoonists – could agree.[72]

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[67] Spencer, 2003.21.
[68] The figure was interchangeably referred to as "brother" or "cousin" Jonathan, and later took the more recognizable form of Uncle Sam.
[69] Cros, Laurence. "Le Canada et la peur de l'annexion américaine à l'époque victorienne, à travers les dessins politiques Canadiens." *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 23, (Spring 2001):160.
[70] Desbarats and Mosher, 43.
[71] Spencer, 2003. 32.
[72] Ibid, 10.

The archetypal cartoon of the period couched the issue in moral terms: Miss Canada, virginal, representing the nation's promise; the fiendishly slender brother Jonathan, or Uncle Sam figure often idle, itinerant or smoking, signs of the sinful existence of loafers.[73] Bengough stood out, however, for his spirited support of free trade, arguing that the Tories' protectionist National Policy implemented in 1879 would hurt Canadian consumers by driving up prices.[74] But while Bengough supported free trade, he worried that it would bring into Canada other immoral American ideologies. Consequently, he blasted Macdonald for being quick to block American goods, but doing nothing to protect against the bad influence of American secular culture and thought.[75]

While nothing in Mosher's life, career and work pointed to his exceptional decision to join the anti-free trade forces, the weight of history was bearing down upon him in profound ways. While his identity as a political cartoonist – brazen, autonomous, and fierce – would earn him the latitude to make the leap from jester to activist, the impetus to fight would come from his identity as an ordinary Canadian citizen, feeling overwhelmed as the political forces in Ottawa, stirred by the emerging global economy, tossed him about in the waves. As the nation's very survival, and its handling at the honeyed fingertips of a man Mosher considered shaky and dishonest, seemed at stake, the democratic cartoonist-critic was forced to ask himself whether the society Mulroney beckoned him toward was worthy of his loyalty. When the answer to that question was no, the reluctant radical had no choice but to act.

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[73] Spencer, 2003. 17.
[74] Ibid, 40.
[75] Ibid, 41.

Chapter 4. Mulroney, Free Trade and the Comic Book

"There is this sickening need to please in Mulroney that makes me want to vomit... We've always had to hold the Americans at arms length, and here was a guy falling all over the place... wanting McDonalds everywhere. You can't help but react to some of these individuals [in power] and some of them make you nervous.... I will admit that personal feelings do come through. You react as a human being... and lots of other people are reacting in pretty much the same way. – Terry Mosher[1]

Figure 1 "When Brian was a lad, he sang Irish songs for the American bosses. Times change. He's become louder."

Aislin, "Brian, The Patriot." Source: *What's The Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade.* Text by Rick Salutin; cartoons by Aislin. Ottawa: Pro-Canada Network.1988, published October 10, 1988.

"Terry, I hear you are a very nice person and a pleasant man. But some mornings I'd like to scratch your eyes out."
– Brian Mulroney's Mother meeting Mosher shortly after Mulroney became Prime Minister.[2]

I. Breaking Bones in Political Cartooning

In the late 1870s, Macdonald's Tories, eager to pass their National Policy – protectionist legislation designed to defend Canada from American economic and ideological assimilation – tried to buy John Wilson Bengough's *Grip*. The pro-free trade

[1] Interview with Mosher, 09/11/03.
[2] McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3670 "Press Clippings, 1984."

Bengough was drawing cartoons depicting the National Policy as an elephant inadvertently stampeding Canadian consumers as it tried to squash Uncle Sam. When Bengough refused to sell, the Tories turned to the Desbarats publishing company in Montreal and offered money to two comic journals, *The Jester* and *Le Farceur*, both of which took the cash and began publishing sympathetic cartoons. The publications folded immediately after the tariff legislation passed in 1879.[3]

One hundred and ten years later, with positions reversed, not much had changed: Tuesday, October 11, 1988, ten days into an election fought over Canada-U.S. free trade, 2.2 million copies of a pamphlet inserted into 23 metropolitan newspapers made their way into the kitchens and living rooms of

Figure 2 Bengough's National Policy elephant, in this cartoon, riding into power trampling the Liberal opposition.

J. W. Bengough, "Riding into Power." Published *Grip* 28 Sept. 1978. Source: Cummings, Carman. *Sketches from a Young Country: The Images of Grip Magazine*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1997. 74.

[3] Spencer, 2003. 10.

homes across Canada.[4] On the cover of the pamphlet was a full-colour Aislin caricature of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney turning green beneath a torrent of acid rain asking, "And why shouldn't we trust the Americans on free trade?" Inside the booklet, a plainspoken dialogue related the failings of the proposed trade deal. Indeed, every page of the booklet put together by the Pro-Canada Network, a national coalition of groups and individuals opposed to free trade, featured a full colour Aislin cartoon. That same month Mosher's cartoons were also distributed to union rank and file through other publications such as the *Canadian Paper Workers Union Journal* and a pamphlet put out by the Canadian Union of Public Employees called *The Facts on Free Trade: Canada, Don't Throw it Away*. But it was the Pro-Canada Network's pamphlet, titled *What's the Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade*, that made the most waves.

Despite the Tories' funnelling of $30-million into pro-free trade propaganda, the pamphlet, a relatively low-cost, entirely volunteer effort, touched off an earthquake of dissent toward the deal – at exactly the moment Mulroney was desperate to rally support for it. Mosher described the ripple effect the booklet – the media quickly dubbed it "The Comic Book"– touched off:

> Several Million copies of the booklet were suddenly out there – being read, passed around, and read again. Within a week it was starting to do what we had hoped for – it was making a difference... Television was reducing free trade to the usual "either/or and now a commercial." But our simple booklet was something people could read at their own pace, talk over, and think about. It gave them points to start asking questions about – and they were asking.[5]

[4] *The Gazette*, October 11, 1988.
[5] Aislin, 1991. 94.

Figure 3 The pamphlet, which reached at least 2.2 million people, was dubbed "The Comic Book" by the national media.

***What's The Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade.* Text by Rick Salutin; cartoons by Aislin. Ottawa: Pro-Canada Network.1988, published October 10, 1988.**

Everywhere, it seemed, people were talking about the Comic Book. In the weeks following, one Montrealer vented his disgust with the booklet in a letter to the editor published in *The Gazette*:

> I was on my way back from Ottawa to Montreal by bus when I overheard a lady speaking about free trade. She would make statements and back them up with the booklet; she referred to it as if it were the Bible.

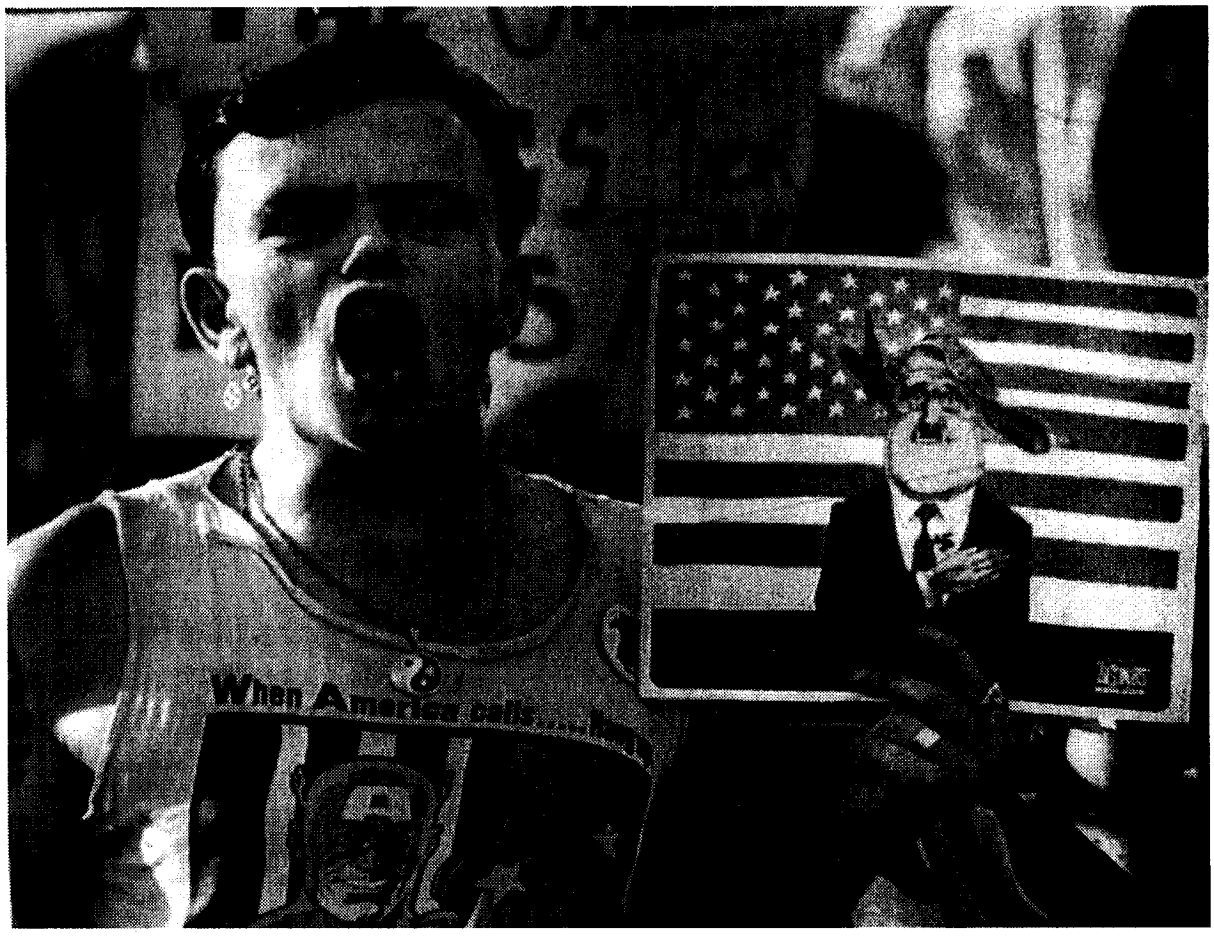

Figure 4 A protester holds an altered *Aislin* cartoon at a 500-strong protest outside a Vancouver Hotel where Mulroney was addressing a Conservative fundraising dinner in June 1989.

Jon Murray, "Speaking Out." Published *Canadian Press*, June 8, 1989 Source: McCord Museum Archive: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3677 "Press Clippings, 1989."

> It scares me to see people take such literature so seriously. I just hope people examine both sides of the issue before voting and do not base their decision on a comic book depicting diseased chickens invading Canada.[6]

In the first weeks of the election campaign, the booklet was succeeding where the anti-free trade Liberals were not – in forcefully articulating the message that the deal, counter to government assertions, would not lower the cost of living, spread around

[6] *The Gazette*, November 17, 1988. In a somewhat ironic twist, the letter's author is misinformed. There was no cartoon of diseased chickens invading Canada in the comic book. Unless, perhaps, he mistook a caricature of a rather sickeningly wrinkled geriatric President Reagan (Figure 6: 41. "Yo Momma!") for a chicken.

Ontario's wealth, or protect Canadian culture and art.[7] Instead, the book explained, the deal would mean "lower-paid jobs especially for women, an end to universal Medicare..., energy shortages, the destruction of the Canadian farm system, and more environmental damage."[8] Indeed, the text, at times stark, written by Rick Salutin, spoke to Canadians' greatest anxieties about the United States. One memorable excerpt read:

> For American businesses, this deal is like a Declaration of Independence in Canada. For us, it means we become part of the American economy. Canada gets to be one department in a big U.S. supermarket.

Following the excerpt was an equally ominous quotation from U.S. President Ronald Reagan: "The U.S.-Canada free trade agreement is a new economic constitution for North America."[9]

One hundred and ten years after Bengough painted Macdonald's Tories into a corner with his powerful political cartoons, Mosher was achieving the same effect with his acerbic caricatures. It was as though, suddenly, a century of technological revolution in mass media no longer mattered. A man with a pen, a razor's wit, and access to a printing press was once again the ultimate paladin of public opinion. One of the hecklers had finally stepped out from the sidelines of national politics to join the crusade – roused by the same issue that had inspired some of the most potent Canadian political cartoons of the early post-Confederation period. "You son of a bitch! You could stop The Deal with that god-damned silly little book of yours!" Mosher recalled a *Gazette* staffer yelling

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[7] *The Gazette*, September 21, 1988.
[8] Ibid.
[9] *What's The Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade.* Text by Rick Salutin; cartoons by Aislin. Ottawa: Pro-Canada Network. 1988.

at him in the lobby one night. "Do you really think so?" Mosher asked, genuinely heartened.[10]

But Mosher's Comic Book cartoons had none of the sentimental morality of Victorian era sketches. There were no syrupy scenes of Miss Canada being wooed away by a gangly, scheming Uncle Sam figures. Most of the cartoons in the Comic Book, drawn as early as 1985, had run in *The Gazette*, and thus lacked the humourless blandness of typical propaganda - these had been composed with a punch line or jab in mind. Some spoke to long-held insecurities, deep within the Canadian psyche, of American designs to overwhelm and assimilate the northern half of the continent: one cartoon showed a magnifying glass above an open copy of the trade agreement, revealing the words "rape, pillage, plunder," while the rest of the fine print remained

Figure 5 Mosher depicted Mulroney's government as dupes to the Americans..

"Free Trade – Haida Chess Pieces and Oil." Source: *What's The Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade.* Text by Rick Salutin; cartoons by Aislin. Ottawa: Pro-Canada Network.1988, published October 10, 1988.

[10] Aislin, 1991. 94.

obscured. Mainly, the cartoons attacked Mulroney and his ministers, showing them as dupes to the Americans, and as taking the Canadian public for dupes as they sold their fool's gold trade deal. The most haunting caricature lay on the third page, the first cartoon to confront a reader opening the pamphlet for the first time: Mulroney, hand over his heart, standing at attention in front of an enormous flag, shedding a single glistening tear; the American flag, that is.

The one cartoon Mosher tried to include that used the concept of Miss Canada, and that appealed to history in its condemnation of Mulroney, the Pro-Canada coalition vetoed as politically incorrect. The cartoon entitled "Two Great Canadians" portrayed two former Prime Ministers, Tories Sir John A. Macdonald and John Diefenbaker, standing forcefully, shielded a woman protectively,

Figure 6 Mosher, surprisingly, did not put up a fight when coalition members vetoed this cartoon as sexist. "Getting on with things was more important," Mosher has said. The cartoon had previously appeared in *The Gazette*.

Aislin, "Two Great Canadians..." Published *The Gazette*, December 31, 1987. Source: Aislin. *Drawing Bones: My 15 years of Cartooning Brian Mulroney*. Toronto: Key Porter Books Ltd., 1991. 95.

and shouting, "Canada is not for sale!"[11] In the third frame Mulroney is dressed as a pimp, pushing an angry looking call girl forward with a pat on the bum, while saying, "Get busy..." The cartoon was dropped when a woman's group in the Coalition protested that, "No sisters are to be portrayed as hookers, notwithstanding our political determination to protect the rights of all female sex-industry workers..." Interestingly, Mosher, who was not used to having his content up for discussion, acquiesced without a fight: " Getting on with things was more important."[12] It was not the first time the appropriateness of the cartoon had been called into question. Mosher had had to dig up a 1948 Robert LaPalme cartoon of Duplessis as a pimp – similarly selling out Quebec to the United States – in order to prove to his editor that the cartoon could hardly be considered risqué.[13] But even without the powerful cartoon, easily one of Mosher's best anti-free trade caricatures, the Comic Book was causing political tremors in the election and threatening Mulroney's precious trade deal.

Then, in a glorious echo of history, the pro-free trade forces fought back using the very same tactic that Macdonald's Tories had used. With the influence of print now a palpable reality, Tory supporting, pro-free trade business coalitions like the Canadian Alliance for Trade and Job Opportunities, bolstered by sudden, huge fundraising efforts, began massive ad campaigns and even produced their own newspaper inserts to counterbalance the effects of the Comic Book. The Alliance, whose members included banks, manufacturers, resource companies and farmers, distributed, through 35 metropolitan newspapers over two weeks, 9-million copies of a four-page pamphlet

[11] Aislin, 1991. 95.
[12] Ibid, 94.
[13] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03.

called *Straight Facts on Free Trade.*[14] Another lobby group, the Business Coalition on National Issues even hired editorial cartoonist Andy Donato of the right-wing *Toronto Sun* to draw cartoons for another insert – which Donato gladly did and, unlike Mosher, accepted payment, though the group never ended up using the drawings.[15]

Unlike Bengough who had published his own magazine, when Mosher signed on to the Comic Book project, putting into action his decision to fight free trade, he faced a peculiar hurdle. Owning the copyright to his work, Mosher knew that, legally speaking, even though many of his cartoons had previously appeared in *The Gazette*, he could donate his work to the anti-free trade side without permission from his newspaper. But *the cartoonist's compromise* hung heavily in his mind: would picking sides compromise his journalistic integrity, he fretted.[16] The cartoonist's visit to then *Gazette* Editor-in-Chief Mark Harrison to sort this question out has become some of Mosher's most oft-repeated lore: "I went to [him] and said… 'This

Figure 7 Mosher, in turn, depicting Mulroney's henchmen, like Trade Minister John Crosbie pictured above, treating Canadians as dupes in their efforts to secure the deal.

Aislin, "John Crosbie on Free Trade." Source: *What's The Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade.* Text by Rick Salutin; cartoons by Aislin. Ottawa: Pro-Canada Network.1988, published October 10, 1988.

[14] *The Toronto Star*. November 10, 1988.
[15] Aislin, 1991. 94, 99.
[16] Ibid, 88.

one time I'm going to pick sides. Any cartoons I do against free trade I'm going to offer them to all the [anti-free trade] organizations for nothing.' My editor said, 'well, as a working journalist you can't do that.'" But Mosher had thought of that already: "I'll offer them [free] to the other side too," he countered. [17] Mosher had tendered his masterstroke. "Okay, but just this once," the editor relented.[18] *The cartoonist's compromise* had been breached.

Speaking in retrospect, Mosher described his involvement in the free trade fight as a calculated experiment: "I was a Canadian nationalist deliberately for the free trade fight because I wanted to find out how that process works."[19] But comments made at the time suggest the decision was spontaneous and emotional: "I've never done this sort of thing

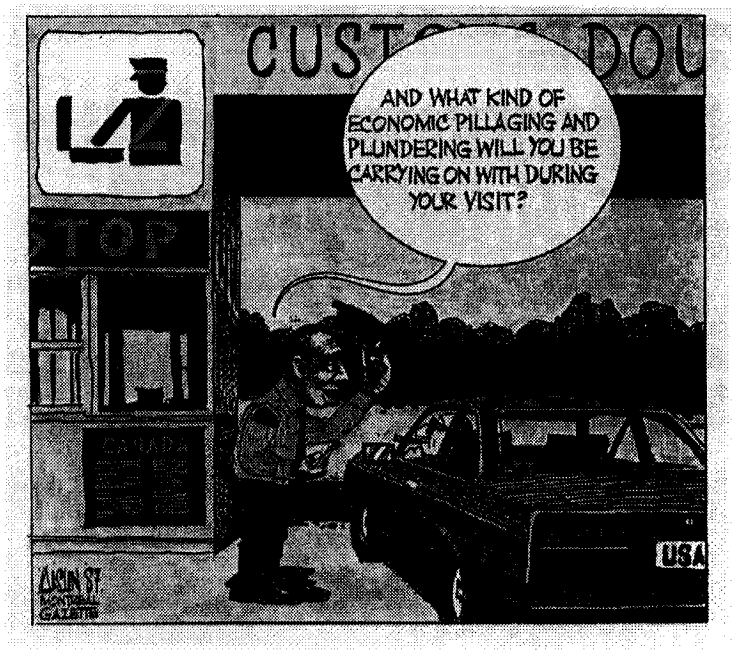

Figure 8 All of the cartoons in the pamphlet touched on long held insecurities deep within the Canadian psyche

Aislin, "Free Trade and Customs." Source: *What's The Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade.* Text by Rick Salutin; cartoons by Aislin. Ottawa: Pro-Canada Network.1988, published October 10, 1988.

[17] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03
[18] Aislin 1991. 88.
[19] Interview with Mosher, 11/09/03.

before... but I'm terribly concerned about this," he told *The Gazette's* Terrance Willis in September 1988.[20] This tension is not surprising considering that, once passions had subsided and the free trade fight faded into history, Mosher was left with the uncomfortable task of rationalizing a huge step outside his primary role as a political cartoonist: that of jester and entertainer.

While Mosher was negotiating the different facets of his identity during the run-up to the1988 election, a similar drama was playing out in the press. The election appeared to force the nation's newspapers to confront their split-tradition as impartial instruments of public debate – the non-partisan and objective character newspapers had adopted since the end of the Second World War – and their symbolic role as the mouthpiece of their publisher – the essential character of the press in the days of 19th and early 20th century partisan journalism. *The Gazette*'s editorial page, for instance, under the direction of its editor, Joan Fraser, was printing anti-free trade editorials alongside Mosher's stinging cartoons. As the election approached, publishers, who as members of the Canadian business community were overwhelmingly in support of the trade deal, saw a possibility their own newspapers could end up sinking the Tories' chances. *Gazette* publisher Clark Davey took the extraordinary measure of penning a signed, front-page editorial in favour of the deal to counter his own newspaper's editorial board-sponsored position. In the end, across Canada only two newspapers, the left-leaning *Edmonton Journal* and *Toronto Star,* took clear positions against the deal.[21]

Just as Macdonald's Tories in the late 1870s used all the resources at their disposal to assure support for their National Policy, Mulroney's Progressive

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[20] *The Gazette*. September 21, 1988.
[21] Aislin, 1991. 99.

Conservatives, and the pro-free trade forces supporting them, hammered their message at Canadians during the volatile, nation-defining election. Historian John Duffy illustrated how precarious the election outcome was, noting one in five Canadians switched voting intentions once, and one in ten Canadians switched voting intentions twice between October 1, the day the election was called, and November 21, election day. "Never did Canadians more firmly grasp the levers of power than when they watched Brian Mulroney and [anti-free trade Liberal leader] John Turner go at it, mano a mano, over free trade."[22] In such an unstable political landscape, the Comic Book might well have tipped the balance against the trade deal and most certainly cost the Conservatives hundreds of thousands of votes – perhaps even their majority.

Everywhere Canadians were wrestling with their conscience in an election that started slowly but soon turned into the most dramatic contest of the last quarter of the 20th Century. Midway through October, the Comic Book was doing more damage to Mulroney's re-election hopes than the Liberals were. On October19, the CBC's *The National* broke news of a coup attempt in the Liberal Party to replace leader John Turner with Jean Chrétien – and that Turner was having none of it. Suddenly Canadians started to perk up. The next week an emboldened Turner confronted Mulroney during the televised debates, and in the most memorable exchange of the campaign the two leaders made passionate appeals to Canadians for and against free trade. Yet their rhetoric could have been uttered on the picnic circuit a century earlier.

> **Turner**: ...We built a country east and west and north. We built it on an infrastructure that deliberately resisted the continental pressure of the United States. For one-hundred-and-twenty years we have done it. With one signature of the pen, you have thrown us into the north-south influence

[22] Duffy, 314.

> of the United States, and will reduce us, I am sure, to a colony of the United States, because when the economic levers go, the political independence is sure to follow.
> **Mulroney**: With a document that is cancellable on six months' notice? Be serious...That's what it is, a commercial treaty.[23]

As Duffy noted, it was this exchange that, once and for all, focused the campaign on the free trade issue, that, repeated continuously in the days following the debate, underscored for voters that they were going to be asked to chose between two visions of the country that had competed for over a century. More than that it showed Mulroney backing down from his previous, lofty claim that the trade deal was a feat of nation building.[24] The political cartoonist is, by nature, extremely sensitive to the scent of deceit and guile. If Mosher needed any confirmation that his instincts were right about Mulroney, this was it – the Prime Minister saying anything, changing his story on national television, to get Canadians to vote for the trade deal – and vote for Mulroney in the process.

But in the weeks that followed, the Tories clawed back, pounding the Liberals with endless streams of TV commercials that called Turner's leadership and honesty into question.[25] Business lobbies raised millions to support their ad blitzes and pamphlet campaigns.[26] And when voters streamed to the polls on November 21, though in the end more Canadians voted against the trade deal than for it, Mulroney came away with a reduced but intact majority government and vowed to press ahead with the trade deal. Mosher's effort had been for nought.

Like in Bengough's fight against the National Policy in 1879, Mosher was forced to accept free trade as a reality. But the fight had been worth it for the political cartoonist,

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[23] Duffy, 344-45.
[24] Ibid, 345.
[25] Ibid, 352.
[26] *The Toronto Star*. November 10, 1988.

and it had not cost him his journalistic status. Rather, it gave him an appreciation of nationhood as something more profound than the 'territorial imperative," and established his credentials as one of those rare modern cartoonists who are still willing to fight. "After years of becoming a less caring, sceptical observer, I regained a hold on something I'd been losing: Canadianism. I'm still not a flag-waving fanatic, mind you; just a Canadian. Itching for another fight."[27]

[27] Aislin, 1991. 99.

Chapter 5. Conclusion.

"No daily cartoon has ever appeared on the editorial page of the New York Times. A cartoon cannot say, 'On the other hand.'" – Former New York Times *publisher Arthur Hayes Sulzberger"*[1]

"Any cartoonist who tries to be a political person or a propagandist is going to fail. That's not what it's all about. We're not smarter than the politicians, we just poke fun at them and we do it for people."-Terry Mosher[2]

"I have weaknesses. If I can laugh at those weaknesses then I'm a healthy individual. Apply that to a society: in Canada we're very good at it. Australia is very good at it. Parts of Europe are very good at it. The Americans are not so good at it – [laughing] at themselves. [It's] easy to laugh at the other guy, but the real test is the business of 'can we laugh at our own.'" – Terry Mosher[3]

Figure 1 Mosher's caricatures of Mulroney will haunt the Tory Prime Minister much like Macpherson's do Diefenbaker and Bengough's do Macdonald.

Aislin, "Mulroney as Canada's Worst-Ever Prime Minister" Source: *What's The Big Deal? Some Straightforward Questions and Answers on Free Trade.* Text by Rick Salutin; cartoons by Aislin. Ottawa: Pro-Canada Network.1988, published October 10, 1988.

I. Between *the cartoonist's compromise* and the cartoon as cudgel

In the 1870s, John Wilson Bengough, the father of Canadian political cartooning, took up his pen and waded into an ongoing ideological battle to define the character of his young nation. In his endeavours, Bengough was motivated by a religiously informed sense of social responsibility and a passionate belief that Canadians should adopt his Christian

[1] McCord Museum Archives: *Aislin Fonds*, P090 – C/48-3677 "Press Clippings, 1989."
[2] Interview with Mosher, 09/11/03.
[3] Ibid, 09/11/03.

values. That mission consumed Bengough throughout his life and informed every aspect of his work and art.

A century later another cartoonist, Terry Mosher, jumped into a similar ideological confrontation that, in the later 1980s, consumed Canada's sense of self. But Mosher did not want Canadians to adopt his wider values. His decision to join this fight was exceptional in a career otherwise devoted, through his political satires, to testing the limits of Canadians' sensibilities. The professional identity he cultivated for twenty years prior to the fall of 1988 defined him as an entertainer, not a political militant. An avid baseball fan, a lover of country and western music and a regular visitor to the beaches of Maine each summer where he vacationed with his family, Mosher was your average Canadian, keenly appreciative of many of the treats of American culture. Yet when Mulroney rose to power, and dusted off the Pandora's box of free trade, Mosher was compelled to take the unprecedented step of using his national stature and formidable talent to stop the Tory Prime Minister, sensing that the nation's very survival was at stake.

Mosher was not spoiling for a fight. Despite an extraordinary talent for art and satire Mosher was about as politicized as his average reader. His decision to try to bring down the political leadership of his country was made only when he lost trust in that leadership. Brian Mulroney, he determined, was *not* deserving of his loyalty. In that moment, from Mosher's vantage point, his society transformed from one, democratic in character, where the will of the majority ruled paramount, to one where the political leadership acted not in the best interest of Canadians, but with its own political and economic fortunes in mind. As the free trade issue solidified, clearly dividing the political and economic establishment from the masses and stoking the flames of the national spirit hotter and higher than they had, in peacetime, burned for nearly a century, it became clear to Mosher that the mass of

people could be led upon an independent path that would isolate that political leadership. Only one obstacle barred his way, *the cartoonist's compromise.*

To call it a *compromise* suggests the natural position – perhaps even our expectation – of the political cartoonist is that his or her commentary be used to advance political aims. The term suggests the natural desire of political cartoonists is to agitate and that they have had to retreat into their role as entertainers in order to secure their place on the editorial pages that give them access to a mass readership. This interpretation makes sense measured against the world of latter 19th century cartooning, a time when, in an embryonic democracy, Canadian cartoonists – like Press's authoritarian cartoonist critic - faced a state whose political nature and future seemed fluid, the memory of iron-fisted monarchical rule still fresh, and the promise of full democracy uncertain and fragile. In this world, using perhaps the most powerful and accessible medium of its time, cartoonists like Bengough protected against a rollback of democracy, reinforced the fledgling nation's aspired-to values and advanced competing visions of how to guard the sovereignty needed to see those values realised.

Today's cartoonists face a much more stable political landscape, one where theirs is no longer the most accessible or potent voice in national debates. Canada's democratic character has been more or less assured with incidents such as free trade and flare-ups in the unity debate the exception rather than the rule. Consequently, calling it a *compromise* seems out of place: there is no reason anymore for cartoonists to see their primary mission as that of democratic guardian or as a champion of specific political aims. Their position in the newspapers that employ them has been built around their role as entertainers and their ability to generate readers in the fiercely competitive newspaper industry of the 20th century.

Yet calling it a *compromise* serves as a reminder of an important and historic symbolic role in the mandate of the political cartoonist. Fortunately, the continuity of this mandate into modern times was made possible thanks to the bellicose, unapologetic, secular and individualistic identity that Mosher and other cartoonists of the third generation developed. Even in the latter 20th century, threats to the political cartoonist's cherished community, threats to the sovereignty and even survival of Canada continued to emerge. In these moments of national upheaval, such as in the free trade election of 1988, cartoonists like Mosher, positioned as they were in the nerve centres of democratic debate – the press – and wielding what is ultimately an emotional and artistic medium, were among the earliest to sense these threats and the most capable of firing warning flares, powerful, resonant and satirical, to alert the rest of us. And as the ideological battle lines of these nation-defining moments were drawn, the nation's political cartoonists, time and time again, stood at the front lines of these conflicts – as Bengough did on the Pacific Railway scandal and National Policy in the 1870s, as McRitchie did on Maritime Rights in the 1920s, as LaPalme did on Duplessis's iron-fisted rule in the 1950s, and eventually, as Mosher did on free trade in the late 1980s.

Cartoonists are citizens just like their readers, their publishers, and all the journalists in between, and all at some point – ideals of objectivity aside – will meet an issue they cannot approach with distance and they will have to choose sides. This is natural, human. In 1988 Mosher was hardly alone in deciding to take a stand, what differentiated him was the volume level of his protest. Mosher could simply have penned anti-free trade cartoons for his newspaper or for syndication. But he did not. Instead, Mosher leaped, exposed, into the no man's land of free trade's fiercest battlefield, mass print-based appeals, wielding in the political cartoon a potent weapon capable of turning crucially high numbers of voters

against the Tories. Mosher risked, consciously or not and even with his editor's "permission" to join the fray, damage to the journalistic credibility of his profession, and, if his publisher decided to assign blame had the Conservatives been jettisoned from power, perhaps even his job. Mosher's move, instead, became proof that *the cartoonist's compromise* is just that – a compromise - and while the nation's political cartoonists happily embrace their role as entertainers, satirists and rascals under normal circumstances, *the cartoonist's comprise* can at any time give way to the cartoon as cudgel – a right cartoonists will never rescind.

In breaking *the compromise* Mosher had relied on the aggressive individualism inherent in the identity of the modern political cartoonist, an identity he did much to shape. But as his act broke *the compromise*, it at once respected many of the principles underpinning it. Unlike Bengough who claimed to have the answers and therefore did not trust his government, Mosher was sure he did not have the answers and therefore did not trust his government when it claimed to have the answers. Mosher's anger at being lied to and watching scandal after scandal, at feeling as though the government did not want him to intellectually engage whether free trade was best for Canada, was the outrage of his fellow citizen. On such a matter of crucial concern, Mosher could not fathom a scenario where he felt his government was making it more difficult for him to be informed. In deciding to act, in casting aside *the compromise*, and in doing so selectively, Mosher was remaining loyal to his reader and to his country. And like Bengough whose cartoons leave Macdonald's legacy less golden than we might expect of a founding Prime Minister, Mosher's merciless caricatures have left the former Tory Prime Minister's candied, glad-handing image in tatters and are likely to haunt Mulroney just as Macpherson's cartoons do Diefenbaker and Bengough's do Macdonald.

Had he not been a temperance man, perhaps Bengough would have been less concerned with bettering his country, advocating on behalf of his fellow citizens, and fighting corruption and patronage in government. Perhaps he would have been more concerned with entertaining his readers and living life and working on his terms. But a century later, despite his relatively self-absorbed, temperamental ways, Mosher proved the modern Canadian political cartoonist would, when stirred, still fight for his country. The Toronto Press Club should be honoured to have him, though perhaps they had better warn their patrons not to cross him.

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