

NAT trains apprentices, but doesn't hire them

Re: "Apprentices needed now!" Alberta employers increasingly desperate to fill hundreds of vacancies looming in the trades, Working Super Section, Jan. 13.

Sam Shaw, the president of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, says, "the government doesn't get it, there is not one cent of federal support for apprentices."

I say Shaw doesn't get it either. Why does NAT not support apprentices by hiring them?

The institution that Shaw runs produces half the tradespeople in Alberta. But it hires only a few ticketed journeymen in its maintenance department and uses multiple service workers (MSWs) or labourers to assist them. The MSWs work as carpenters, elec-

tricians, plumbers, sheet metal workers, instrumentation mechanics and have years of experience, but no certification. Does Shaw not recognize the importance of indenturing apprentices for NAT's large and growing facility maintenance department? The maintenance employees are kept as labourers not able to certify.

Why doesn't NAT employ apprentices,

who later become journeymen? If the journeymen at NAT have no apprentices behind them, what happens when they retire?

The best and the brightest pass through the halls of NAT. What a perfect opportunity to show the importance and value of continuing to train qualified tradespeople.

John Fletcher, Edmonton



BRUCE EDWARDS, THE JOURNAL FILE
David Copperfield

Presto... without the change

Magician's tricks are old hat

We had enjoyed David Copperfield's performance in Edmonton several years ago and were given tickets this time, so we thought we would enjoy more of the same.

The key word here is "same," since that is what the performance was. After sitting through a video with every talk-show host and other celebrities saying how wonderful Copperfield was, and then seeing another video showing his previous feats, the main performance started.

A young boy was told to stare at a large post card at the bottom corner of the stage; a platform which was previously empty was revealed showing a motorcycle; Copperfield escaped from a container with a lead pipe; he picked numbers that he could not have known before; a car was unveiled on a platform that was bare before, and Copperfield read a letter from a father in Australia (last time it was Hawaii) so he could reunite with his daughter and the daughter and Copperfield ended up on the screen in Australia.

There also was one trick that had drew people from the audience sit on several rows of bleachers. They were hidden from view and when the bleachers were shown again, the people no longer were there.

This trick had also been done previously and a radio personality who took part later said that the audience members were all selected prior to the performance and told not to reveal how the trick was done.

Perhaps for future shows, the advertising can state that almost all the tricks have been shown before so that people will not waste their money.

A.M. Wilson, Edmonton

Non-smokers have the right to live

I would like to address all of the incredibly immature and selfish smokers who feel that their right to smoke where they live is more important than those people like me and my spouse, who are non-smokers and who do not want to be exposed to the toxic effects of second-hand smoke.

I grew up with two smoking parents, as did my spouse, and we both hated it. I remember my dad yelling at me to "go outside" whenever I complained about his smoking, and my mom telling me to shut up when I would admonish her hacking.

My dad died 10 years ago of lung cancer and emphysema at the age of 65. He never lived to see his grandchildren grow up. He died a few months after he and my mom retired.

Last year, my mom was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which makes it hard to breathe. She has always had a terrible cough, caused by her chronic bronchitis. COPD is often a mix of two diseases: chronic bronchitis and emphysema. There is no cure for COPD. It can only be managed.

If I hated cigarettes before when I was a kid, I hate them even more now after watching how it affected my parents' health. Cigarettes should be banned from all retail stores.

I cannot prove it, but as a result of being forced to grow up with smokers, I constantly have mucus in my lungs that takes me at least an hour to expel. It even affects my voice when I get up in the morning. Sometimes I lose my voice in the middle of the afternoon or I start to go hoarse from excessive mucus in my lungs. I started noticing this about 10 years ago.

Don't tell me that my lungs have not been affected from second-hand smoke, because every ailment I get is related to my respiratory system. And don't tell me that your smoking isn't harmful to me, because I cannot tolerate second-hand smoke for very long and my eyes get irritated in less than an hour. I refuse to spend time with people who smoke

NATIONAL NON-SMOKING WEEK - JAN. 21-27

Hurray for Hancock



BARB TARBOX FALLS ASLEEP WHILE HAVING A CIGARETTE IN THE SMOKING ROOM IN THE PALLIATIVE CARE WARD OF THE GREY NURS HOSPITAL. THE EDMONTON WOMAN, WHO HAD SMOKED SINCE AGE 11, TRAVELLED THE COUNTRY IN THE MONTHS BEFORE SHE DIED TO WARN CHILDREN OF THE DANGERS OF SMOKING. SHE DIED OF LUNG CANCER IN MAY, 2003.

when my own body tells me that it is physically affecting me and isn't healthy. Obviously, I do not allow smoking in my home. Family members who smoke have to go outside on our balcony. This is my choice and my right, and if you don't like it, too bad. Where's your smoking addiction going to get you in the long run anyway?

If I decide to buy a condo it will be in a non-smoking building.

Many of the fires that start in Edmonton are caused by careless smoking. Smokers who insist on smoking in their condos are literally asking me to put my life and everything I own in their hands for them to gamble with, because

Hurray for Hancock

Re: "Hancock pushes for smoking ban" The Journal, Jan. 16.

What great timing by Health Minister Dave Hancock to talk about a provincial smoking ban and restrictions on tobacco sales! Next week is National Non-Smoking Week, and the perfect opportunity for Alberta to look at strengthening its tobacco laws.

Today, 10 Albertans will die as a result of tobacco. And this will happen every day this year. Tobacco use is the leading avoidable cause of disease, disability and premature death in Alberta, resulting in one in every five deaths.

Canadian Cancer Society research shows that it only takes one or two cigarettes for a teen to become addicted to tobacco. The tobacco industry targets youth by paying to have their products placed next to candy in convenience stores. These displays are called powerwalls, and several provinces have already banned them.

Smoke-free legislation across Alberta will help protect all Albertans, not just minors and those lucky enough to live in cities whose council voted in favour of the health of its constituents.

Evidence shows that smoke-free legislation, restrictions on advertising and marketing of tobacco products, denormalizing the tobacco industry, higher tobacco taxes, and bans on where tobacco products can be sold are all parts of an approach that must be taken to reduce the burden tobacco places on the health of our communities and the health-care system.

I urge the rest of caucus to get on board with Hancock.

Nicole Schile, community services co-ordinator, Canadian Cancer Society - Alberta/N.W.T. Division

Ethanol less environmentally friendly than gasoline

Liquid biofuels are promoted as alternative sources of energy and the federal government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars to promote their production.

But liquid biofuels make the carbon dioxide/greenhouse-gas problem worse, not better.

It is generally agreed that increased atmospheric carbon dioxide is causing global warming. The increased carbon dioxide has come mainly from the increasing rate at which fossil fuels are used.

Are biofuels realistic alternatives to meet the increasing demands for energy?

Ethanol is the most promoted example of a biofuel. What about the carbon dioxide emissions related to its use as an energy source?

Three litres of ethanol have an energy value equal to two litres of gasoline. The three litres of ethanol also have the same amount of carbon and, therefore, with respect to carbon dioxide, the direct use of ethanol as an energy source is as bad as gasoline. But that is not all.

In the case of gasoline, exploration, petroleum recovery, and refining activities create an additional carbon dioxide burden which must be taken into account. To obtain biofuel ethanol, a suitable crop must be cultivated, planted, fertil-

ized, harvested, and transported for processing, fermentation, and distillation. These activities lead to a much larger additional carbon dioxide burden than in the case of gasoline.

Furthermore, the energy obtainable from the ethanol is less than the extra energy required to obtain it — a losing proposition on the energy side as well. Overall, for the same net energy, biofuel ethanol has a far larger carbon footprint than gasoline. Ethanol should not be labelled green.

Ratification of the Kyoto Accord presumably has committed Canada to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide it emits. If ratification is to be more than a

feel-good action, just how will the government bring about carbon dioxide reduction?

If normal developments continue and if no economic incentives, Canada in 2007 will use between three and five per cent more energy than was used in 2006. There will be a corresponding increase in carbon dioxide emissions.

The Kyoto Accord problem would be even more difficult to solve if liquid biofuels were to play a really significant role in our future energy demands.

W.E. Harris, professor emeritus, department of chemistry, University of Alberta, Edmonton

Cotler has championed the fight for justice, equality

Re: "Cotler inconsistent", by J.O. Darwish, Letters, Jan. 18.

Irwin Cotler has spent his entire career as a professor and academic, an international human rights lawyer, a member of Parliament, and as justice minister and attorney general of Canada.

He has fought for justice and equality and he has fought to protect the vulnerable.

Cotler is on record not only as a supporter of the Palestinians and of all people from every race and ethnicity, but also as a supporter of the Palestinians and of all people from every race and ethnicity.

He has not only supported Israel, but also he has criticized Israel when appropriate.

He is on record, in hundreds of public speeches and publications spanning some four decades, as being against all forms of racism, inequality, hatred and bigotry.

While he served as justice minister and attorney general, one of his top priorities was combating racism, hate speech, and hate crimes.

These, he argued, "constitute an assault on the inherent dignity of the human person, an assault on the equal dignity of all persons, an assault on the right of minorities to protection against group victimization, and an assault on our own multicultural democracy."

Cotler often stated that, under his watch, Canada would not be a sanctuary for hate, or a refuge for bigotry.

Irwin Cotler's track record speaks for itself. He has spent the majority of his adult life working to, in his words, "confront racism and to bring to the dustbin of history, where it belongs."

Leigh A. Lampert, Toronto

Calgary has the answer

Re: "Photo-radar probe to look at city-run alternatives: Study to be completed by July," The Journal, Jan. 17.

With all of the hype about whether Edmonton police should or should not operate photo-radar, not once have I heard or read what Calgary has done.

Calgary runs its own system and it's very happy with it. Has anyone from Edmonton asked how Calgary operates its



PHOTO-RADAR PROBE. COURTESY NEWS SERVICE

In some cities, police operate photo radar.

system so successfully? This should be a slam dunk, or are we too proud to get their input?

Roy Zima, Edmonton

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American Idol judges too harsh

I have watched *American Idol* for the past five seasons. At best, it is entertaining. At worst, with a few exceptions, it was the worst. I saw an obviously autistic young man fumble his way through *Unchained Melody*.

Two of the judges were utterly cruel. Their snide comments and outright laughter at this handicapped man were sad and horrible to watch. Seeing the effect of their words on this young man and hearing the judges continue to spite his reaction was perhaps the most revolting thing I have ever seen on television.

I enjoy an audition "train wreck" as much as the next person. Contestants take their chances, and it is fair that some of them get dumped on. But the producers have a responsibility not to make fun of the handicapped for our entertainment.

David Thiel, Edmonton

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