

The summit of boredom

Annual economic summits may do a lot for the political fortunes of the leaders of industrial countries and they do give reporters something to write about.

But for the average person in the street — whether it be France or Canada or Japan — the exercises are meaningless.

They are little but platforms for leaders to speak to their own people, a stage for politicians to show themselves as international statesmen. It is a joke.

There are never any meaningful reforms or change that come from these meetings that might alter the world economy or even the economies of individual countries.

Indeed, subjects of discussion extend well beyond economics into areas such as apartheid in South Africa and AIDS. These issues certainly have an indirect effect on economics, but there are certainly more direct issues leaders can discuss.

And while all this hot air is being fanned around the room, more and more money is being spent simply to protect these politicians.

The fact that thousands of security people must be brought to the site would seem to be reason enough to call a halt to these meetings, even if the issue of security is about the only thing that isn't a crashing bore.

About the only "important issue" that has been as boring recently is the free trade talks between Canada and the United States. But even as boring as they may seem at least they may result in some benefit or at least an effect, on the lives of Canadians.

The biggest "breakthrough" at the summit in Venice was the agreement by the seven leaders that reform of agriculture subsidies should be undertaken.

Of course, there is no plan for reform, no idea who will do what or when, but at least they said they agreed on something.

The fact that was the greatest accomplishment in Venice is a pretty sad indication that little of importance will ever be undertaken at these meetings.

And to think, the next one will be in Toronto. Spare us.

7

572