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Thumbing a ride ...

by Nina Miller

Planning to thumb across Canada this summer? If so, Aleksander Pruszyński is thinking about you. He's trying to organize a hitch-hiker's union in Canada and he's using a Polish system — Autostop — as a model.

Autostop was created by the Polish government in 1956 as a means of cheap transportation for youth. The hitch-hiking season runs from May through to October and is designed for students taking long trips outside major cities.

To join Autostop, the hitch-hiker must produce a passport and pay a small fee. In return, he is issued a booklet with an I.D. number and marked coupons. The coupons serve as fare for a ride. Appropriate coupons are signed and given to the driver at the start of the ride.

As incentives to drivers prizes are awarded for the most coupons. Drivers participate in a lottery at the end of the year. Pruszyński says drivers are more likely to stop for hitch-hikers with an Autostop booklet. An Autostop member is easily traceable and is thus less likely to harm the driver.

This system, however, offers little personal protection for the rider. This isn't a problem in Poland where the cars are government-owned, says Pruszyński. "The system has been operating for twenty-two years and there have been no major incidents reported by the Polish Government," he says.



Prisoner of the white lines of the freeway - would you pick up this man?

He says the program would need modifications for use in Canada, though.

"For the system to work here," he says, "minor changes have to be made. A guarantee would have to be made to guard drivers against lawsuits." He says medical insurance covering the rider would also be included in membership.

So far, the program is just in the planning stages, Pruszyński says. "We need a grant from the federal government before it can

get off the ground. Afterwards it will pay for itself."

In an effort to hasten the grant, he says he will speak to the Minister of Transport in Ottawa.

In addition, he has been promoting his scheme to groups like the Youth Hostel Association, the Alberta Motor Association and universities, where memberships would most likely be sold. "There has been mainly positive response," says Pruszyński, "except from the RCMP, who were very non-committal."

Free press guards democracy - publisher

by Alison Thomson

A free press is a prime requisite for democracy, said J. Patrick O'Callaghan, publisher of the *Edmonton Journal*. He was addressing the annual convention of the Alberta New Democratic Party in Calgary.

O'Callaghan introduced his remarks by stating that he is a member of no political party, nor will he ever be. A publisher must be nonpartisan if the newspaper is to be regarded as above party politics, he said. He noted that his lack of political affiliation includes Sinn Fein and the I.R.A.

He said the *Journal* is in general, in support of Lougheed and his party, but must sometimes consider itself the only effective opposition. He added that the *Journal* has five full-time reporters covering the legislature.

O'Callaghan said he finds large majorities "depressing" regardless of which party forms them. He said the *Journal* had no choice but to act as an opposition since, "we are the surrogate for the public in all things."

He said a newspaper which does not have to follow a particular party line "muddleheadedly" is able to be

freewheeling and to criticize everything. "The *Journal* in particular and the press in general must continue to question every action of the government," he said. "Our legislative staff knows it is free to follow any lead, without fear or favour."

O'Callaghan noted that while the people had decided they want to be governed by the Progressive Conservatives, this does not mean they approve every action of that government.

O'Callaghan said the implication of the theme of the convention — "The future of democracy in Alberta" — is there will only be democracy in the legislature if there are more New Democrats.

He said we obviously do not want policy determined "in the friendly atmosphere of the party caucus." He added, "Even the most unprepared ministers (and it wouldn't be fair to mention Mary LeMessurier) are safe from defeat in the House."

O'Callaghan concluded his remarks by saying democracy could not function without a free press. He said democracy is still functioning, and it is up to the people to ensure that it does not fail through wanton neglect.

L'Express barrels in

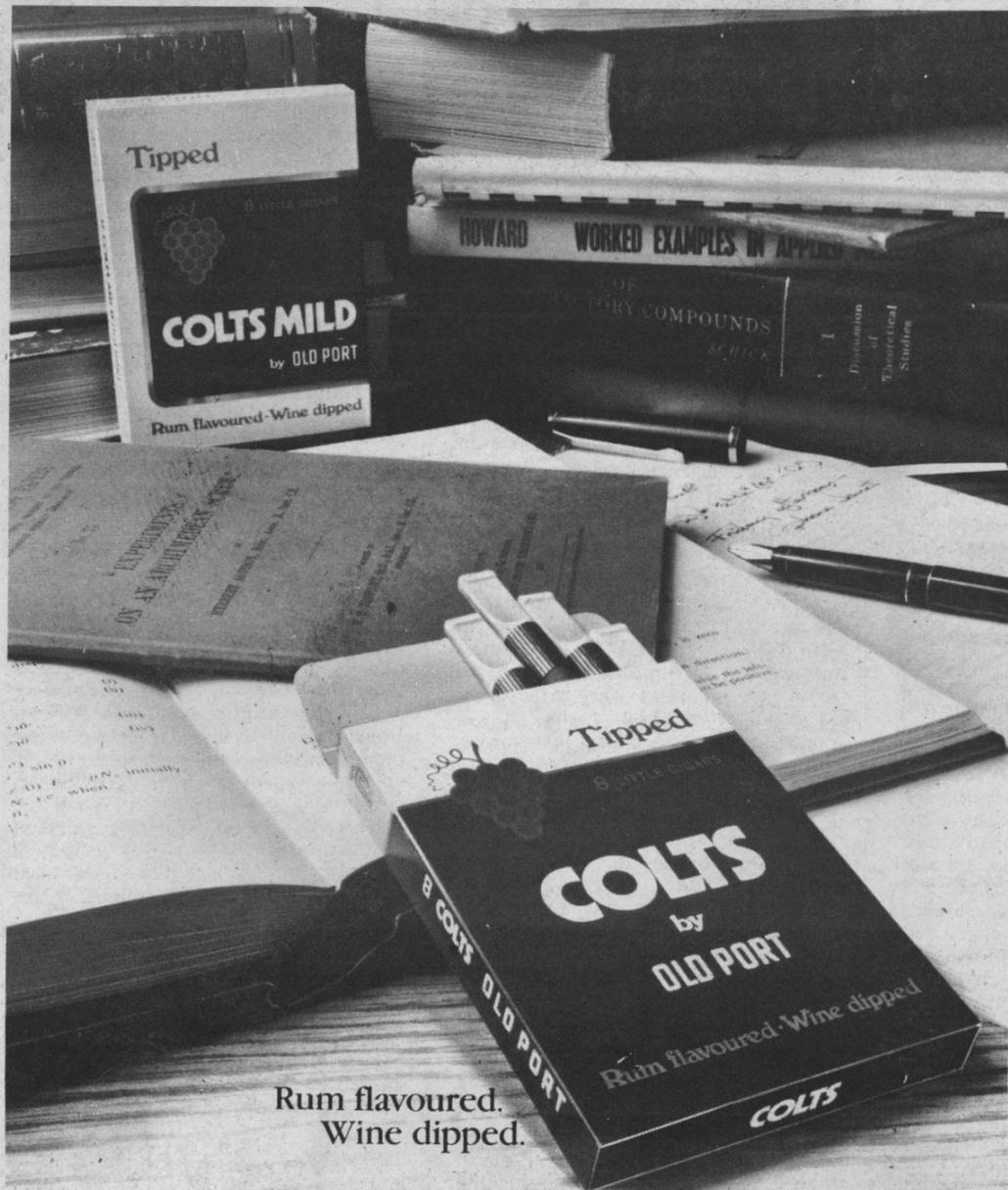
The Students' Union Coffee Shop has a new name - *L'Express*.

The name was chosen from about 50 entries in the "Name the Coffee Shop" contest. The prize for the winning entry was two tickets to the Sarah Vaughan concert on October 31 in SUB Theatre, and a torte from the coffee shop.

The name was selected by a small committee, but it turned out the winning entry was submitted by a non-student. Hence the prize went to the first runner-up, Cheryl Bailey, for her entry, *The Subway*.

"We wanted a name that defined the class and atmosphere of the place," said Sharon Bell, vp internal. "The name is to be indicative of good, fast service."

"Reaction to the coffee shop has been really favorable, and sales have been good so far," she said.



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