

MANIFESTO

WHY I RANT

For Rick Mercer, to rant is to be Canadian.

This exclusive rant for *Maclean's* launches his new book of rants.

I DIDN'T COME out of the womb ranting but chances are I heard a few good ones while I was in there.

Indeed, if my instinct to rant comes from anywhere it's my mother.

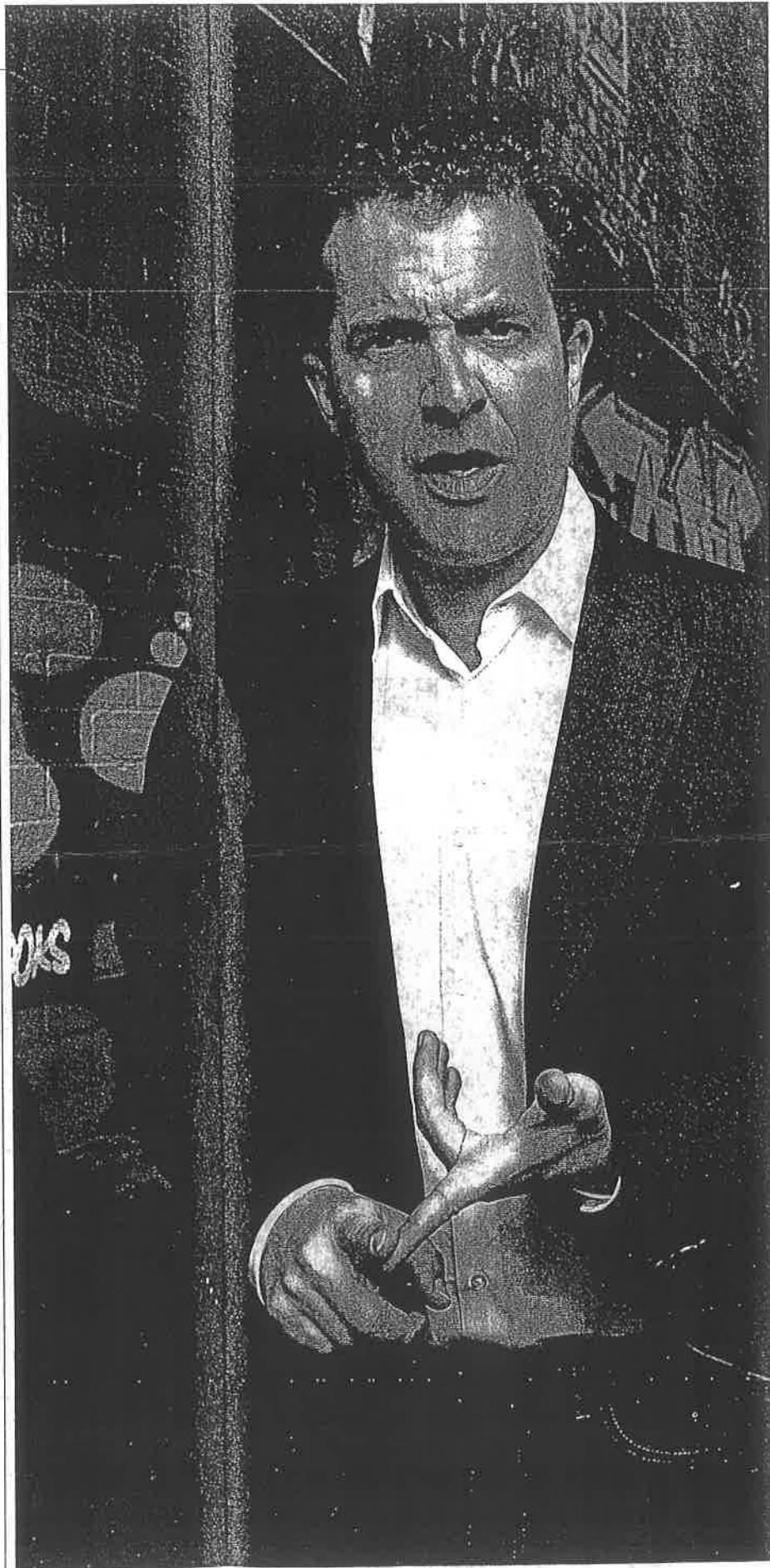
One of my earliest life-defining memories as a kid was being dragged against my will to the bank because Mom had a meeting.

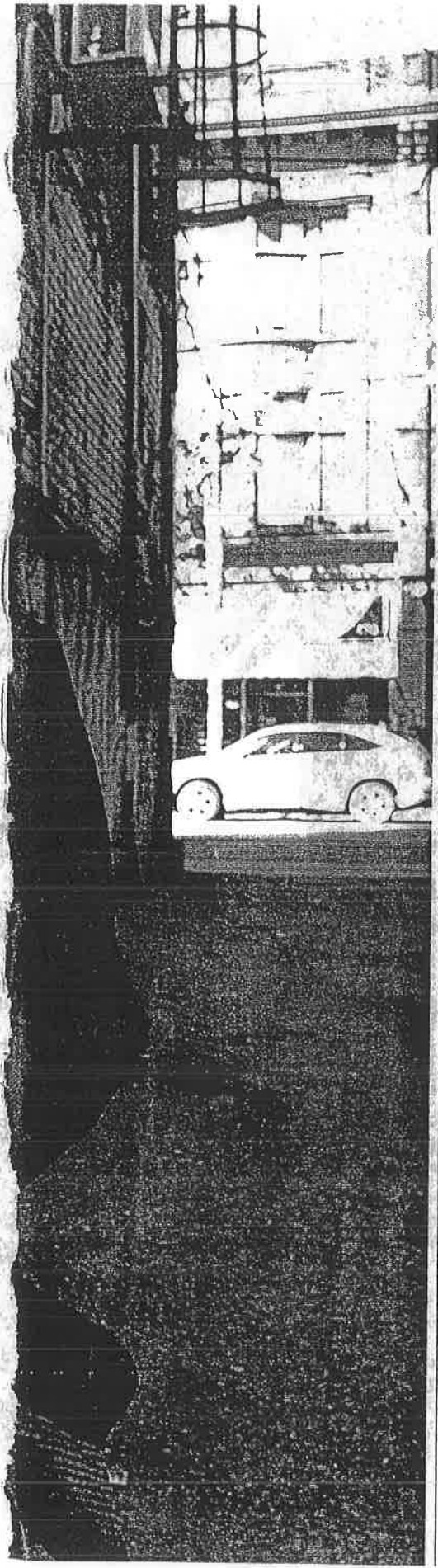
I can remember sitting in a chair next to my mother while she had an excruciatingly dull conversation with a banker. I remember wondering what I had done to be forced to sit through this and if it were actually possible to die from boredom. And then everything changed. I will never forget the moment. The banker leaned forward and said, "Now Mrs. Mercer, do you have your husband's permission to do this? Perhaps we should give him a call."

From my point of view the day just got a whole lot better; for the man behind the desk the opposite was true. He had no idea what he had done. He had unleashed a hell storm that he had absolutely no chance of surviving. The poor, hapless man.

To say the oxygen was immediately sucked out of the room would be an exaggeration. To say that the blistering rant my mother delivered to the dumb creature made his ears bleed would not be. Needless to say very soon we were no longer in a cubicle but in a much nicer office upstairs, with a different banker who was doing everything he could to stop my mother from closing every account and going across the street. The dude who suggested Mom get her husband's permission to open a chequing account was sent to "get the lad a fudge stick."

Go Mom!





Everyone should rant. Ranting not only makes you feel better but occasionally, as my mother proved to me many times, you might get results—justice, satisfaction or a fudge stick.

Canadians don't rant enough. We are busy people and I get that. We don't necessarily have the time or the inclination to come across like mad people who are constantly barking about waste, corruption and lack of transparency in three different levels of government. You may not want to be that guy who is constantly ranting about those people who drive their car into an intersection on a yellow light knowing they will get stuck in the middle and block traffic for everyone else and they don't care. And I don't blame you. I am that guy, I've been ranting about those people for decades, and they are still allowed to walk the earth and drive a car.

But the danger in not ranting is dire. If we as a nation don't rant then the powers that be will use that complacency against us. Take for example the last federal budget. The omnibus budget. When I ranted about that budget to my Tory friends in Ottawa, when I said, "Why in hell does Jim Flaherty's budget contain a provision that allows the FBI to operate on Canadian soil?" they said what they always say, "People don't care." Turns out they were right. When I asked them why are there hundreds of environmental regulations being changed without any discussion whatsoever, they said again, "People don't care?"—and it turns out they were right again. In fact, the government is so convinced that we don't care they loaded the budget with so many items that had nothing to do with a budget that even MPs had no idea what was in there or what passing it could mean.

Now occasionally Canadians do suddenly care about the nation's business and it always catches the government off guard.

Remember the Speech from the Throne when, out of the blue, it was announced that Stephen Harper's government would be rewriting the lyrics to *O Canada*? You just know the Prime Minister was convinced we wouldn't care, that he could do what he liked; but, we did. The country exploded with people ranting about our national anthem and oh, what a beautiful sound. Turns out nobody,

Rave on: Mercer thinks Canadians don't rant enough, with dire consequences

left or right, liked the idea of the Prime Minister sitting around with paper and pencil trying to figure out a way to rhyme the nation's name with his.

As a result of these occasional examples of the country standing up and saying, "Wait a minute," the government has a strategy to deal with anyone who doesn't play the part of the complacent Canadian. They like to play whack-a-mole with the heads and reputations of anyone who has an opinion or a question.

If you in your capacity as a Canadian citizen, taxpayer or Grade 10 student doing a social studies project ask any questions about

any pipelines anywhere in Canada, you will be branded by the government as a dangerous radical or a vicious cruel monster in the same league as Saddam Hussein, Moammar Gadhafi, or David Suzuki.

This is a pretty effective strategy but I doubt it will last for long. Hopefully it will dawn on Canadians that the one thing we shouldn't care about is what the government thinks of us or what names they call us. Prime ministers, premiers and cabinet ministers aren't our friends; they are just people in bad suits who work for us.

We are the boss. And if they want to for us they have to listen to us, answer questions and occasionally, like all employees, listen to the boss rant. ✦

EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT

Keep Calm and Carry On OCT. 4, 2011

I am not by nature a nervous person. I'm not brave, I'm just not nervous. Because, luckily, I've learned to ignore everything politicians have to say.

This is a good thing, because in Canada, every time you turn around, another Harper cabinet minister is in a full-blown panic. It's like they believe their No. 1 job description is to freak Canadians out. It's at the point now where if Vic Toews or Jason Kenney ran into my house in the middle of the night screaming "Fire," I'm not moving until I smell smoke.

It doesn't matter what the issue, the message is always the same: be afraid, Canada, be very afraid. And build more prisons.

And the Prime Minister? The only time he seems happy is when he's hanging out with Nickelback, or he's leaning forward, reminding us once again that we live in perilous times, that danger is lapping at our shores. Winston Churchill was more upbeat at the height of the Blitz.

Meanwhile, statistically, we are (vii...)