

# Comment

## Tut would have loved it in Ottawa

This week a fabulous discovery was made at Saqqara, the royal burial ground outside of Cairo. The 3,000-year-old tomb of Maya, treasurer of Pharaoh Tutankhamen, was found. Inside was a mass of priceless royal documents.

I have managed to secure a copy of one of the most important: Treasurer Maya's confidential pre-budget memo to Tutankhamen, written in February, 1381 B.C.

TO: "Most Exalted Sublime Lord of the Nile, Son of the Dawn, Beloved of Isis, Delight of Ra, Sovereign of Upper and Lower Egypt, Scourge of the Hyksos, Light of Lights, etc.

FROM: Maya, Treasurer and Keeper of the Royal Wealth.

SUBJECT: The Royal Deficit. Divine Magnificence, it's time you face facts. Egyptians are hopping mad at you. From one end of the Nile to the other, people are fed up with such high taxes and say they can't pay any more. How many more chickens and bushels of wheat can we take from them?

Now I know the Queen is urging you to spend more in order to buy more popularity. And I know a lot of Egyptians think the Treasury here in Thebes is a bottomless well. It's also clear that the opposition, led by Prince Tu-Na-Ah, is gaining strength. Just last week I was down in the Land of Punt and people were daring to say aloud that the Pharaoh had to go. Imagine!

Bad news, your Celestial Sublimeness. The Treasury is empty. I don't know how much longer we can go on



**ERIC  
MARGOLIS**

minting those fake gold coins. Soon we won't even be able to afford the tin they are made from. Inflation is rising and merchants in the bazaar grumble that sales are way down. Last week, two papyrus mills near Memphis shut down and laid off 2,000 workers.

Even more insulting, inferior foreigners like those stupid Hittites or ignorant, smelly people from Kush don't seem to want our money any more. The Hebrew moneychangers tell me our currency has dropped over 40% in value since you and your father, Tru-Do-Ah, began playing funny games with the economy. Just last week I was in Nubia and, can you believe, those miscreants actually demanded their annual subsidy in Phoenecian money. They refused Egyptian currency!

Which brings me to my main point, Your Incredible Perfection. I know how you hate to deny any of your subjects, especially after those years of living in your father's shadow. And I know how spending makes you popular. But if you don't slash ruinous spending, Egypt will go the way of the Garden of Eden.

Keep raising taxes and the economy will tumble into

ruins. Every time you have upped taxes, smart money has fled the country to Cyprus and Mesopotamia. Why do you think all those big new buildings in Ur and Nineveh have names like "The Ra Centre" or "The Nile Towers?"

Don't forget that you are the Supreme One. You can cut spending. Sure people will yell and moan. All those high-spending priests of Karnak will raise a rumpus. They think money is made to be spent on religious affairs. And the Priestesses of Isis will bellyache to high heaven if they don't get more funding. People will howl when free grain and free herbal treatments are stopped.

Ignore them, Oh Terrible One. Do what must be done. Throw all those lazy, overpaid eunuchs off the Imperial payroll. Cut handouts, stop foreign aid to silly places like Kom Ombo. Let government officials walk to work instead of riding in official chariots. Tell all those fat priests who do nothing all day to go out and get honest jobs. Cut taxes to spur investment. Invite Caananites, Hebrews and Greeks in to show us how to run the economy right.

Last week I lunched with General Imhotep. His chariots all need new wheels, the army's spears are 30 years old and we have only a one-day supply of arrows. Our galleys have termites and their sails are full of holes.

Mighty Pharaoh, be brave. A nation is only as strong as its currency. Let's put Egypt back to work. This may be our last chance. If we don't act now, our land may one day become nothing more than a quaint tourist attraction.