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Democratic process mocked

Compared to the campaign of 2000, this current municipal election is turning into a bit of a yawner.

Where the 2000 campaign had four candidates seeking the mayor's chair, this year there are only two seeking Clarington's top job, and the incumbent, Mayor John Mutton has refused to enter any debates with his opponent Richard Ward.

Mayor Mutton explained his reason for refusing to debate with Ward in a written statement last week.

Mr. Ward has a record of having verbally abused certain municipal employees, explains Mutton.

"There is not a single incident of verbal abuse but repeated incidents of verbal abuse," says Mutton in his statement. Because "Mr. Ward has pushed the envelope of free speech well beyond the breaking point," Mayor Mutton has respectfully declined to debate with him. The Mayor says in his statement, he is convinced Ward will attempt to use the public debate forum to defame civic employees who in Mutton's words are "hard working, competent and deserving not of his [Ward's] rebuke but the thanks of the public who they serve."

At Tuesday morning's candidates' meeting, (not a debate) sponsored by the Clarington Business Group, Ward said these allegations were false, fabricated and without a single shred of truth.

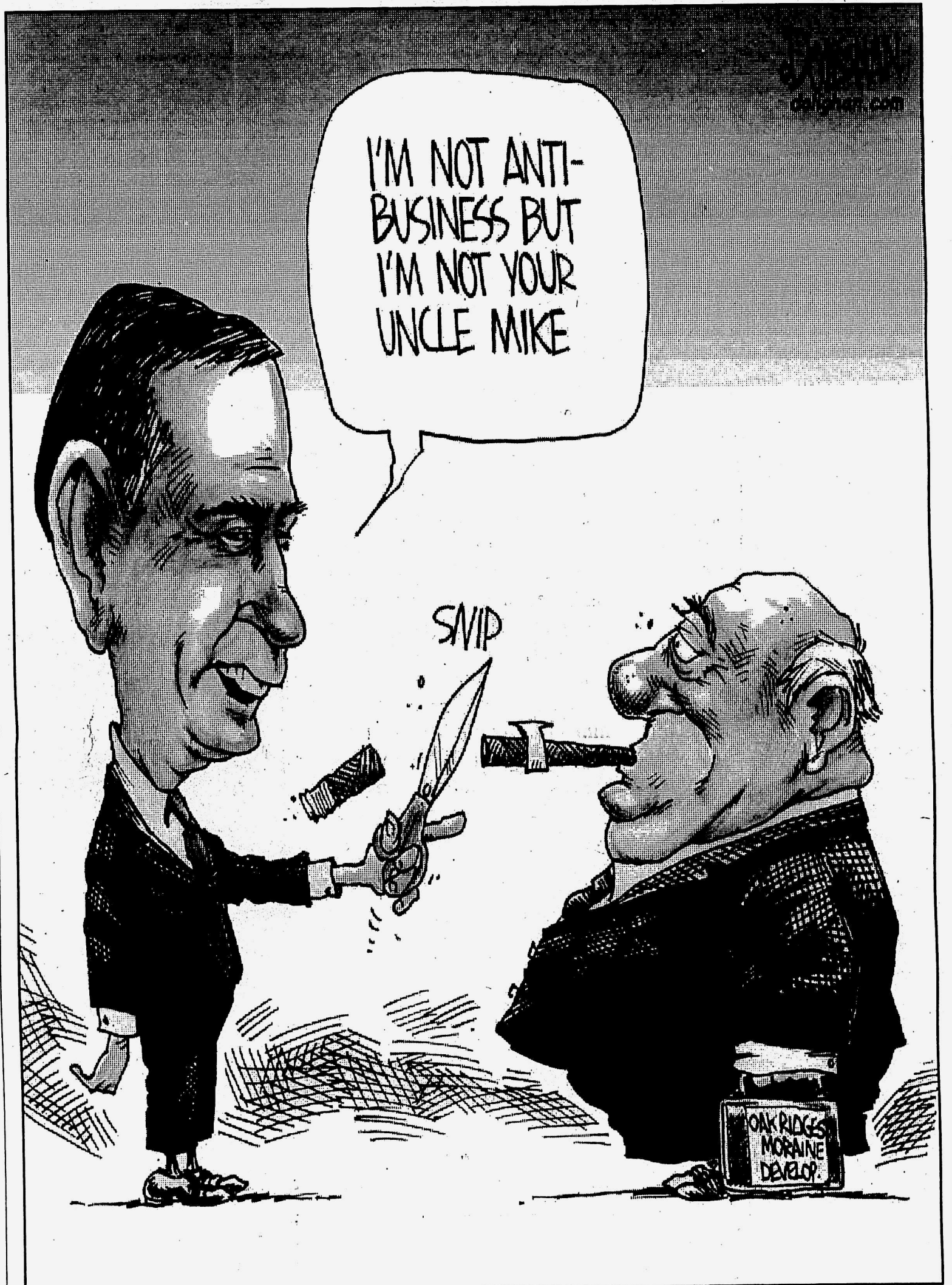
Mr. Ward claims to have his own list of incidents of harassment he has suffered through his dealings with the municipality.

If Mr. Ward is guilty of the offenses the Mayor accuses him of, why hasn't he been formally charged? The Mayor didn't waste any time threatening to sue this publication when we printed opinions he didn't like.

Unfortunately, we the voting public will not get the chance to ask questions and get unrehearsed answers this campaign, depriving us of our ability to make an informed decision. We also will not have the opportunity to see how the two mayoralty candidates conduct themselves under the pressure of a debate which can get heated and personal.

A good moderator keeps the discussion on topic, and keeps candidates from raising inappropriate and unrelated issues.

The democratic process has been mocked by the mayor's refusal to enter into public debate.



As I see it ...by Peter Jaworski

While Alliance arms were up in excitement, some Tories were up in arms with anger.

So began a new merger proposal for Canada's right of centre political parties, this time with the approval of the leadership of both parties. The federal Progressive Conservative Party, and the Canadian Alliance are one vote away from becoming the new Conservative Party of Canada.

This merger, hailed by Brian Mulroney as "good for democracy," and seen by David Orchard supporters as a betrayal, is the only hope Canadian conservatives have of toppling the Liberals with

Paul Martin at their helm.

Ah, who am I kidding? The Conservative Party is the only hope the Tories have of not being reduced to fewer seats than they had under Kim Campbell. Meanwhile, the Alliance would be lucky to maintain their seats in the West, never mind making further inroads into Ontario and Quebec.

Joe Clark, former Prime Minister and leader of the federal Progressive Conservative Party, is the most outspoken current critic of the merger. David Orchard

and his supporters round out the top anti-merger spokespeople.

Clark seems to think that the Tories still represent the only tent big enough to challenge the Liberals. The Alliance, according to Clark, is still perceived as 'too right wing' and, with roots in the West, as something of a regional protest Party. Since politics is all about perception, these things will mean eventual trouble for the Alliance. Merging with them, then, can only diminish future Tory success.

Clark, however, doesn't seem to know what he's talking about. The Alliance foothold may still lie with Alberta, but their popular vote in the last election was up significantly in Ontario—arguably the political king maker. It didn't translate into seats due to the vagaries of our first-past-the-post political system, but that doesn't change the fact that citizens of Ontario are willing to vote Alliance, and to do so in significant numbers.

And don't forget that the Conservative Party's new

leader just may end up being Mike Harris—hardly a Western regional figure. Harris would bring with him the Big Blue Machine that brought him back-to-back wins in Ontario despite being way down in the polls prior to each election. A Harris-led Conservative Party may not get very far in Quebec—especially since Harris does not speak French—but it might be enough to equal electoral gains across Canada.

David Orchard's com-

JAWORSKI continued page 4