

Free Press Editorial Page

Spoil rod, spare child

A few eyebrows lifted and some adverse comments were heard but the recommendation from the Ontario Department of Education that teachers and principals in the province's schools refrain from the use of corporal punishment in any form seems to have been well received by the general public.

While corporal punishment, generally known as the "strap," has never been specifically authorized, it nevertheless was condoned under Section 40 (1) (b) of Ontario Regulation 339/66 which states that "A pupil shall submit to such discipline as would be exercised by a kind, firm and judicious parent."

It was assumed a kind, firm and judicious parent would not hesitate to apply corporal punishment if he or she deemed it necessary. Teachers interpreted the regulation as giving them the authority to administer the same brand of justice.

The Department of Education, "without commenting in any way on the responsibilities of parents," now suggests that this regulation should be interpreted as "providing an atmosphere of respect and trust between students and teachers with the cultivation of individual responsibility as a major goal."

Not many will quarrel with that interpretation of the regulation. However, a few of us will wonder if it is not figuratively transferring some of the teacher's exercise of power into the hands of the immature students.

We must admit schools have changed extensively since the days we attended. There has been marked improvement in all areas, from types of building to the quality of instruction. However, we doubt if students have changed very much.

A mischievous boy or girl out to upset the equilibrium of the classroom with a little devilry could sometimes be controlled by the threat or laying on of the strap. It was normally done on the palm of the hands. The victims were, of course, idolized by fellow classmates for a few days. But if memory serves correctly, the teacher was the object of new respect and above all, the undivided attention of the entire class, from that point on.

We'd be interested in knowing what the teacher is going to do now to command the same respect and attention. And would you believe teachers who wielded the most authority were the ones you thought fondly of after school days were over and done with?

We will acknowledge there were abuses of authority sometimes but it was generally due to extreme provocation. Perhaps the more sensitive students suffered from the teacher laying on the strap but it has been our experience that few sensitive pupils were on the receiving end. And if they were, we doubt they were marked for life by the experience!

Generally it seemed to be the teacher who suffered more than the student. We have seen teachers break into tears after strapping someone. Perhaps this new interpretation of the regulations is primarily for their benefit.

We wish the strapless teachers and the Department every success with modern methods of maintaining discipline but we still can't help wondering if the old saw "spare the rod and spoil the child" might not have more truth in it than we care to admit these days.

Not a bad old place

It is no bad thing that Canadians in whatever province they may live should be reminded from time to time of how good a land this is.

We are all apt to have romantic ideas about what life in other countries may be like, particularly those of the "Old World," and it is salutary to have someone bring us down to earth. As, for example, did the irrepressible Mr. Real Caouette, Member of Parliament for Villeneuve, speaking in the House of Commons recently on his return from a visit to France. Said Mr. Caouette, in part:

"In France, Quebec is often quoted as an example. They tell us: France is going to save you. Mr. Chairman, the contrary is far more probable, for Canada could perhaps help to save France.

"During our stay in France, we

learned that the Fiat Company is controlling today 30 per cent of Citroen, because the French did not have the necessary capital to save their own automobile industry.

"Some tell us that France will save us financially. I studied the French standard of living. Please note that I am of French descent, but I am a Canadian, and if the two countries must be compared, let us not be shy about it . . .

"Mr. Chairman, the difference is unbelievable. The salaries in France do not amount to even 50 per cent of the salary paid to our Canadian workers. The worker in France pays about 35 to 45 per cent more rent than a worker in Canada; and here, in Canada, how we complain about the rents being too high. You can imagine what the situation is like in France.



Cosy refuge

Sugar and Spice

by Bill Smiley

Nothing like a good dose of the flu to make you feel like turning out a column of deathless prose. I feel like a fighter on the ropes in the fourteenth round with the crowd yelling to the other guy, "Kill him! Kill him!"

So perhaps you'll forgive if we don't sparkle too brilliantly today, and just clear up some items this week, then begin the New Year with a fresh slate and a sound constitution.

We had a very merry Christmas, thank you. But an insidious old custom is being revived. No less than three different groups of carollers appeared at the door, and had to be suitably entertained. By the time the last gang had left, we were well into Christmas morning, among other things.

It's a charming old tradition, but I hope it doesn't spread too far. If it does, next Christmas Eve I think I'll just call the cops and have the carollers charged with disturbing the peace. It would be a lot cheaper.

"I ask about the cost of a pound of butter and I am told it is \$1.35 a pound. I am speaking about France, not about China, and their workers earn half as much as ours. To our question: How much does an automobile worker earn in the employ of Citroen or Renault? We get the reply: from \$2,400 to \$2,700 in Canadian dollars . . .

"And with regard to modern conveniences, they know nothing about it, absolutely nothing. I was staying at the Hotel Royal de Versailles. It is time-worn, it is old. They have not got around to installing toilets next to each bedroom; you have to go down the hall, as we used to do here in Canada 35 years ago. Their way of life is not at all like ours . . .

For once, everything fitted when the gifts were opened. See me in my new off-white turtle-neck sweater and Pierre Trudeau will look like somebody from Hayfork Centre.

Kim, with her usual exquisite sense of timing, almost turned Boxing-Day into a boxing match when she announced she'd like to go to Israel and work on a kibbutz for a year, after finishing high school. So a couple of years from now, I may be a Jewish grandfather. That would be a switch.

Church bells and a blazing log fire and jolly evening with old friends brought in the New Year on a pleasant note. Not for me the \$30-a-couple New Year's Eve in a nightclub with a lot of idiots in paper hats, throwing streamers, blowing their little horns and kissing everyone in sight.

Speaking of bells, Lt. Col. John McEwing of Spokane, Wash., retired, has a bell in the belfry which is bothering him. Describing himself in a letter as a "sentimental nut," he says he has bought the bell from the little red schoolhouse he attended as a boy, near Port Elgin, Ontario.

That bell has many memories for him. He planned to present it, no strings attached, to the new consolidated school which has replaced the little one-room country schools, as a symbol of all of them, those humble institutions where many a great man got his start.

The Colonel flew east and talked to the architect responsible. He was enthusiastic. But the trustees stalled. They were going out of office at the end of the year, and "couldn't make up their minds" about having something as old-fashioned as an 1875 school bell on the premises.

To me, it seems an excellent idea, and I hope the new board will be receptive to the Colonel's idea. We talk a lot about Canadians, and preserving our heritage. Why sell it to the scrap dealers?

This brings us in a roundabout way to the new school system in Ontario, which promises to be interesting. The old local school boards, chosen in their own communities, are being scrapped, and county boards, elected, have already replaced them.

Theoretically, the idea is a good one. It should give equality of educational opportunity to all children. That's the purpose. In the bad old days, before 1969, the fatter centres got the best facilities and often the best teachers, while the leaner ones had to struggle along with what they could afford.

I hope it works. But I have reservations. Many a time have I seen something made bigger, so that it would be more efficient and cheaper to run. Usually, the opposite occurs. Expenses increase and efficiency decreases, because of sheer size.

Parkinson's Law takes over. Empire-building begins. Already hundreds of new administrative jobs have been created for the new system. Under it, board members will receive a stipend, and no doubt, expenses. The old boards worked for nothing. Paper-work will double, then triple, and so on.

Hope I'm wrong. It will take a couple of years to tell. And by that time, the system may be so rigid that changing it will be like getting an elephant to stop standing on your foot. Any comments?

Free Press back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 13, 1949.

Mr. and Mrs. William Mainprize on Tuesday celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary quietly. They have been esteemed residents of Acton for 36 years. All members of their family now reside in the community.

Mrs. M. Schroedel gave a tea and shower for Miss M. Clayton, bride-to-be, on Monday afternoon. Mrs. W. Gowdy poured tea assisted by Mrs. B. Hinton and Mrs. C. Leatherland.

Commencing its 100 year as a municipality, Nausagaweya Township on Monday marked the occasion with honoring many of the living officials of former years and paying tribute to the men who down through the century of incorporation had laid well the foundations and had guided the affairs of the township so efficiently.

The mild weather of the weekend spurred on the workers at the Acton Scout Hall and they succeeded in finishing the roof coating for the entire building. Now inside work can be proceeded with during the remainder of the winter months.

The days are now noticeably longer. Evidence of the recent mild weather was found by Roy Arnott, who on Sunday saw a frog in the creek on the seventh line. Rather unusual for January in this section.

Weston steam-rolled to an overwhelming 12-2 victory over Acton in the first game of the season in the arena here. The first home appearance of the Tanners was completely spoiled by their very bad performance.

Readers will be interested in knowing that Mr. Harold N. Farmer, M.A., Barrister, of Oakville, has taken over the Mackinnon business and office and will practice his profession here. He will be assisted by his father, Dr. T. Farmer, a retired Hamilton lawyer of much renown.

The indications are that the farmers will have \$2.25 wheat for some time to come—at least for several years. The first anniversary services since peace was declared will be held in the Methodist church this Sunday. This will be the 73rd anniversary of the founding of the Methodist church in Acton. The congregation of the Baptist church will attend in the morning and from Knox Knox church in the evening.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 11, 1894.

The old ferry scow at Burlington Canal has been repaired by Mr. Coleman of Burlington, who some time ago purchased it from the government and has now sold it to them again. The new scow carried off by the storm has never been seen since.

John Matthew has purchased and taken possession of Hortop's Flour and Feed store on Mill St. The public will be glad to see him in business.

Mrs. Joseph Millward was severely injured by falling down the cellar one day last week. She is recovering.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Canadian Champion, Milton, January 7, 1868.

At the close of a political meeting at the Boyne, Trafalgar, on the 16th ult, a dispute arose between Elijah McC and Robert E. when the former used violence, and a row seemed imminent, on which Benjamin Waldbrook, Esq., J.P., interposed and commanded peace in the Queen's name, stating that he was a magistrate. McC, struck at him with his half-closed fist and seizing him by the breast tore open his vest. For this he was arrested on Monday last and tried before Messrs. John White, Jas. McGuffin and J. B. Willmott, P.P.s. The sentence of the court was a fine of four dollars and costs, amounting to about seven dollars. Immediately thereafter a charge was laid against Mr. McC by Mr. ERE, of assault on the same occasion as the former. The charge was admitted, and a nominal fine of one dollar and costs inflicted, the magistrates and the bailiff, J. A. Frazer, devoting their fees to charitable purposes.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, January 16, 1919.

The Municipal Skating Rink opened on Saturday night with good ice, comfortable waiting rooms, brilliantly lighted and a large attendance. This will be a healthful, popular resort during the winter. Messrs. Beardmore and Co. have stinted on nothing to make the rink an attractive feature of the town's social activities for the winter.

Mr. H. S. Wilson, drover, had rather a trying experience on Monday evening. He was driving a cow and her calf in a sleigh on Main St. A little chap jumped on the sleigh and this scared the cow, which jumped over Mr. Wilson and out the front of the sleigh. The horses then ran away. They got detached from the sleigh at Queen Street and headed for Milton, their former home. The damage was slight but the mixup looked serious for a while.

Salt and Pepper

by Hartley Coles



Maybe you read in a recent issue of this newspaper where Eramosa council was presented with a picture of James Peters, one of the first township clerks. My curiosity was aroused. Clerks are appreciated during the years they serve in office but usually they receive no further recognition.

What was so unusual about James Peters outside of the fact he was clerk in pioneer days?

The answer belongs in the country's archives but my source of information was the late Frank Day's book, "Here and There in Eramosa," and a small booklet from the pen of Hugh Templin entitled, "A Few Leaves from the Past."

James Peters, it appears, was quite a man! One of the founders of Speedside Congregational church, a total abstainer at a time when whisky was the common beverage at settlers' "bees", Peters was also accused of being a "rebel" along with other prominent Eramosa men at the time of the 1837 rebellion.

Early Wednesday morning, December 13, 1837, Peters was roused out of bed by Squire Inglis of Guelph with a glittering sword drawn from its scabbard, and a company of 32 men with rifles and bayonets. He was bundled into a sleigh with other prisoners and taken to jail in Hamilton.

Their crime? Peters, then age 36, John Butchard, 49, and James Benham, 43, were accused of being ringleaders of a "gang" of rebels who were planning to burn the then village of Guelph down! In Fergus, a bastion of Tory politics, rumors were rife that "Captain" Peters and 50 men, supported by township officials, were planning to destroy the bridge over the Grand River. Special guards were posted.

Eramosa, in the imagination of those ultra-loyal Tories, was a hotbed of rebellion. This conclusion came from a public meeting held at the Central school in Eramosa, near where the Stone Church now stands. Peters, township clerk, was elected secretary and requested to draw up a resolution expressive of the will of the settlers on the state of the country.

The resolution was short and to the point: "That we return home and mind our own business."

The government interpreted this form of rail fence sitting as treason. They arrested seven men. They released four,

Calvin Lyman, Hiram Dowling, William Armstrong and James Parkinson, after levying fines. Peters, Butchard and Benham went to jail in Hamilton.

The accused occupied two cells, had no heat, no blankets or bedding of any sort in weather not unlike that of the last week. Later they were put in larger quarters with others accused of treason.

One attempt to send them to a higher tribunal before their trial resulted in a narrow escape. They believed, and with good reason, that a jail fire was set by persons anxious to blow them up because there was gunpowder stored in an adjacent cell. The prisoners managed to extinguish the blaze.

After eight minutes of deliberation at their trial on March 8, 1838, the jury decided on a verdict of "Not Guilty."

Prosecuting attorneys Sir Allan McNab and Solicitor General Draper used every means to have the men hanged. Peters lost his position as clerk but regained it in 1840 when public feeling was practically all on the side of the arrested men. No wonder. Night raids from Guelph on Eramosa settlers which seem to have been little better than looting expeditions, kept the settlers poor paying fines.

Eramosa township voted the Reform ticket almost from that date. It might be added that the "prisoners" were founders of some of the most respected families in the township. Frank Day said that at least 75 per cent of the land owners in the township in 1953 were connected by descent or marriage with families of the principals in the 1837 affair.

Owen in Hillsburg, the issues were not so clouded. William How, the first settler in Hillsburg, was arrested about the same time as the Eramosa "rebels". Sixteen well-armed loyalists from Toronto surrounded his Hillsburg home one day and carried him to Toronto where he was convicted and relieved of the 500 acres of land on which he had performed settlement duties.

He, like James Peters and others of his ilk from what was truly then the neck of the woods, were the forerunners of representative government in Ontario.

That's why James Peters hangs in a framed picture in the Eramosa township council chamber instead of being "framed" to hang on a gibbet.

Photos from the past



TWO WEDDING photographs were found in an old Acton album, but the names of the bride and groom, or their guests at the outdoor reception, are unknown.

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