

Free Press Editorial Page

Total reform needed . . .

The case for regional government has been clouded by the recent report from the Ontario Economic Council which has called for immediate reforms in the total system of government in the province.

The Economic Council endorsed the concept of regional government but warned against merely reorganizing municipal boundaries and creating larger units of government. Reform must also include changes in the operation of financial services, as well as the municipal system.

Until the pricing of public service is more adequately determined and taxes bear some direct relationship to the quality and quantity of services provided, the Council said the role of government—local, regional, provincial and national—will continue to be misunderstood by the electorate.

The Council also recommended that before introducing regional government to any area, studies should be undertaken to provide the people who pay the bills information on the current costs of providing public services. They should indicate the savings that could be affected by introducing regional government and added cost from expansion of services. They could also be used as a comparison for figures available when regional government is in power.

The structure of municipal government is based on a system which was formulated over 100 years ago when many municipalities were small. Now the bulk of the

population is concentrated in 33 cities and old methods of dealing with change—annexation or amalgamation—are no longer relevant.

The current financial mess is being complicated by a bewildering variety of financial transfers and shared-cost programs. Many municipalities did not share in the benefits because they never knew they existed. Division of the provincial tax base between the province and the regional governments must be made simpler to achieve efficiency. Any further complication of an already complex system would create more chaos.

Goal of government, the report affirms, must be to achieve efficiency in operation and a handy ear and responsiveness to the electorate.

Political systems have been unable to adapt to change and many of the current troubles can be traced to the failure to solve housing, pollution and traffic congestion problems. Local political leaders sometimes use the system to resist reforms.

If we are to maintain control over our governments they must be held responsible for raising money and spending it. So, it follows, any change in government structure must make it more democratic.

And it is that particular issue which is engendering the most opposition to regional government. Citizens in smaller and rural communities are disturbed that they will receive a smaller, not larger, voice in their own affairs.

Barnacle on a whale . . .

We must admit to being a little disturbed at the conclusions Acton Council reached about regional government—at a special meeting Thursday.

Council almost unanimously opposed hooking Halton up with Peel in a regional scheme and wisely asked that the process of regional government be slowed down. However, we felt they ignored the main issues which Mr. McKeough repeatedly stressed—develop a plan which would benefit Acton the most when it does come.

Obviously some members of council did not believe that the Minister of Municipal Affairs meant what he said about implementing regional government. Mr. McKeough has firmly stated that where no conflict exists with the basic principles of regional government, he would incorporate local opinion into final legislation. He stressed, however, that he is not extending the right of veto over a legislative program to which this province is committed. This makes the next few weeks a time for constructive thought, a faculty this council has been singularly blessed with over the past few years.

It was a democratic round-the-table discussion and in the main most councillors agreed regional government was inevitable. But some seemed to feel they could drag their feet on the issue and this would delay implementation of the plan.

We think the town fathers could have worked along the lines Mr. McKeough suggested and come up with some reasonable alternatives to the Minister's plans. Do ratepayers want to be included with Georgetown and the top half of Esqueness in one lower tier region? Maybe they would rather be included in a plan with Guelpch?

Councillor Marks suggested that a lower tier council could be composed of two representatives from Acton, three from Esqueness and four from Georgetown. He felt these figures would give us a reasonable voice in administration at the lower level.

How about boundary changes? Perhaps there is some way Acton could go it alone along with segments from Nassagaweya, and Esqueness and Erin townships? The area will undoubtedly grow and perhaps would have the necessary population to have at least one representative on the larger body.

We need an imaginative assessment of the situation and concrete suggestions for the ear of the Minister. Otherwise we will be pawns in the old game of fadling out boundaries and representation by the thinking of "experts".

It is true many unknowns are still creating a fog over the whole picture but, as the mayor facetiously suggested, we could very well be the barnacle on a whale's belly in any new area created for the region.



THE BROOK, laced with icy fringes, cuts its tortuous path through rocky Nassagaweya forest, wispy stalks of grass breaking through a deep blanket of snow and casting minute shadows. The sun climbs higher and nearer each day, its light bringing Spring closer day by day.—(Staff Photo)



Sugar and Spice

by Bill Smiley

Some pretty earth-shaking events occurred around our place lately.

First of all, my wife has taken up curling. Perhaps "taken up" is not the right phrase. "Falling down" might be closer.

The first time she stepped on the ice, her feet went to heaven, and her bottom went to the other place. The earth shook (you must have felt it) and she has the purple posterior to prove it.

She has fallen only about four times per game since, and has mastered the art to the point where she can look up from her sprawl with the injured innocence of a pro hockey player trying to pin a penalty on the guy who didn't trip him.

For years she has looked down on the sport. She thought the curling club was a place where men went to drink, smoke, play pool and poker, curl, and get away from their wives. And she was right.

Now she has learned that it is a cultural centre where women go to drink, smoke, play bridge, curl, and get away from their husbands. And she's right again, as usual.

But as long as she can do it with me, and keep an eye on me, she feels it is one of Canada's grand old sports. I used to get home from the curling club at midnight. Last time, we got home at 3 a.m., after being invited somewhere for "coffee". I wish I could get the same price for that coffee that the distributors do.

Anyway, the Old Battleaxe has been hooked. She doesn't know a hog from a huck, a skip from a drop-out, but with Hugh's old stretch ski pants on, and Hugh's old skiing sweater on, she's the prettiest curler on the ice. If she could sweep that ice the way she can sweep the kitchen floor, we'd be in the money every time.

The second earth-shaker around here was Kim's performance in the piano exams for her degree in music.

Not only did she knock off a first-class honor mark, but she topped the list of candidates. She can now add the letters A.R.T.C. after her name. That's longer than my degree.

That cost me. Kim phoned, collect, between music lessons in the city, and my wife phoned every relative between here and Zanzibar.

Off the cuff . . .

Rudeness is a weak man's imitation of strength.

When you find yourself upon the horns of a dilemma, appraise opposing alternatives realistically and make a decision. Otherwise you could end up like a certain jackass with an exceptional intelligence quotient. He was placed midway between two equally attractive bundles of hay. He died of starvation because he could not find reason to choose between them.

Free Press

back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, February 17, 1949.

For the first time in several years, Acton High School will stage a program at the annual commencement. James Dills is getting primed to be Master of Ceremonies. Ted Tyler and his helpers will put on the wildest fashion show you have ever seen.

R. R. Parker has been chosen as president of the new Home and School Association. Mrs. D. Garrett and R. Chandler are first and second vice-presidents. Mrs. W. D. Smith is secretary; Mrs. J. Creighton handles correspondence and B. Hinton is treasurer.

The Y's Men's Club decided at their recent meeting to sponsor an eight-week public speaking course. This project in adult education will be directed by the English Department of the O.A.C. The course will be free to Y members, with a small charge to non-members.

While operating an automatic press last Friday at the Free Press office, Robert MacArthur, foreman, had the misfortune to suffer a deep laceration on the back of his right hand. The feeding arm of the press came in contact with the hand. The injury is making satisfactory progress.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, February 15, 1894.

Messrs. W. H. Storey and Son deemed it advisable to face existing circumstances with a reduction in prices paid for work in some of the departments and a revised price list. The table cutters decided they could not accept the new prices. Management was firm that the scale must be accepted or the men find work elsewhere. The men were just as firm and walked out.

Mr. Storey at first said he did not care to be interviewed and did not care what the public thought. "We know our own business and propose to conduct it as we think best. We explained to the men if prices rise, we shall raise the wages again. I venture to say these men are the best paid in the country. They come in here about 8, and leave about 5, and have earned their \$3, \$3.50 and sometimes \$4 (a week). We are filled with orders at reduced prices and I have no doubt we will fill the vacant places."

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Canadian Champion, Milton, February 11, 1869.

Following are the officers of the Esqueness Agriculture Society for 1869: President J. Smith Bessy; vice-president J. Frazer; Messrs. W. Clay, G. Wigglesworth, D. Cross, F. Barclay, P. McGregor, Joseph Kirby, R. Knight, C. P. Presant, W. McNery, Directors. Where the show is to be held is yet an open question, and there is some competition between Acton and Georgetown for the honor.

We are pleased to record an instance of the skill of Dr. James McGregor of Guelpch, as an Occulist, for which branch of his profession the doctor has already an extended reputation. An operation on both eyes for cross vision was performed on a lady of this town so skillfully that no one can determine any deviation from the normal mode of vision. The doctor has also performed an equally successful operation on a boy in Milton, and we can confidently recommend him as a safe and skillful Occulist.

We understand that technical objections are being urged against the Mayor and Mr. Vanallen taking their seats in the town council; the former, that his license and bond make a contract, and the latter that he has an unfinished account and has an indirect interest in the contract for the tower on the town hall.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, February 20, 1919.

One of Canada's foremost sons has passed away. In the sudden death of Sir Wilfred Laurier Canada loses her leading statesman.

Capt. W. G. C. Kenney is still in Egypt. He figures it may be a year before he can get home again. Miss Nora Kenney, nurse, is now on the staff of the hospital at Cochrane.

H. P. Moore has retired after 40 years as secretary-treasurer of the Acton Board of School Trustees and R. M. McDonald was appointed to the position. Mr. Moore began in 1879 when W. H. Storey was chairman.

At the morning service Sunday the Methodist congregation by a standing vote unanimously pronounced itself in favor of the resolution praying the Dominion government to make the prohibition of the liquor traffic permanent.

The Hon. David Henderson celebrated his 78th birthday at his residence on Bower Ave. The native of Halton represented it for 30 years in the House of Commons.

Snow shovelling duties have not been onerous this year, yet some sidewalks have never been shovelled.

Salt and Pepper

by Hartley Coles



THE GREAT DEBATE about the greatest hockey player of them all needs no further argument. In my opinion it is Detroit Red Wing veteran Gordie Howe, the prairie kid who made good in the city Ford made famous.

Don't tell me about "Rocket" Richard, Howie Morenz, Bobby Hull, Syl Apps, Jean Beliveau, Doug Harvey, Teeder Kennedy, Charlie Conacher, Johnny Bower, Frank Mahovlich, Bobby Orr, Lester Patrick, Milt Schmidt, Max Bentley or other N.H.L. ers you may personally think is the "greatest". It's done, settled, finished! Gordie Howe's got them all beaten.

For those who wondered how it took so long for me to join the Howe's No. 1 camp when you've known about it for years, I'll simply state I couldn't make up my mind. For me it was a toss-up between Howe, Richard, Harvey, Morenz and goalkeeper Bill Durnan with Richard having the edge by the shade from a needle.

Then Sunday afternoon I had the opportunity to curl up my knees, snappa cappa and see the entire N.H.L. game on the magic lantern—Detroit playing L.A. Kings.

Old Gordie Howe stood out like the Empire State building in a pigmy village. Instead of tottering around and playing like someone almost at the 40 mark, he was a going concern and a danger everytime he stepped on the ice.

And did you notice the Big M? Three goals, thank you! He's been a scintillating star of the Detroit machine since he shed his Maple Leaf last fall. And Alex Delvecchio is another stand out.

That D-H-M line may win Detroit a Stanley Cup.

SEEN ANY UFO's lately? No? I described the ribbing I've been taking ever since the last time I discovered one shooting around the heavens, so maybe it's just as well you don't admit it.

Cynics in the back shop and in the news room have pooh-poohed the suggestion so often I'd almost been convinced I hadn't seen what I saw. But now three paperback books have come out in support of the theory. So an outstretched tongue to you cynics!

Official reports, a 937-page one

included, haven't settled any arguments, only created new ones. The U.S. spent half-million dollars on one report. So there was more than rumor behind the reports.

People have reported seeing Unidentified Flying Objects since time began. Start with the Bible. There's mention of all sorts of celestial phenomena and great balls of fire.

The latest rash of sightings started in June 1947, when a Kenneth Arnold flying his private plane near Mt. Rainier, Washington, noticed a series of unusual flashes. Then he saw nine bright disc-shaped objects flying south at an estimated speed of 1,700 m.p.h. Trying to describe what he had seen, Arnold used the word "saucers." The daily press pounced. Flying saucers were born.

A Gallup Poll estimates that not only 90 per cent of Americans believe in them but another five million think they've seen them on other occasions than Saturday night.

The official line has been that people were seeing weather balloons, swamp gas and other assorted things that come out of bottles.

Anyway, the three paperbacks help cloud the picture more and aid beginners in the argument by presenting the 1,600 odd articles and books on UFO's in some kind of perspective.

So keep your eye on the sky.

"Ten years ago a pudgy, semi-alcoholic housewife named Grace Metalious penned a novel about the extra-curricular activities of smalltown New Englanders, and so polluted it with the psychopathology of sex—incest—perversion, adultery, etc.—that her publisher ordered her to clean it up. But even after she subjected "Peyton Place" to some derogatory, she still had what the French call "a Novel of Scandal." Immediately it was published, "Peyton Place" climbed aboard the best-seller train (what a comment on the perverted reading tastes of the public!) and Grace Metalious became rich. So rich that she could afford to buy herself a new home, two Cadillacs, divorce her husband, take on a pair of lovers, and in 1964, at the age of 39, she tragically drank herself to a premature death. She was the chief casualty of "Peyton Place." —The National Voice, November, 1968.



FIREMEN'S CONVENTION here in 1908 was highlighted by a parade. Some of the units are shown coming down Mill St. toward Main in this picture owned by Roy Brown, Bower Ave.

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