

Free Press Editorial Page

The economic implications ...

"Prior to the introduction of regional government in any area, studies should be undertaken to provide the elector with information on the current costs of providing public services. These studies should also indicate the savings that might be effected by the transfer of responsibility to a regional government, and the additional costs that might result from any improvements or expansions of services within specific areas of the region."

That is one of the key recommendations from a recent report of the Ontario Economic Council on Government Reform in Ontario.

Very simply stated, it suggests we should be advised of whether regional government will cost more or less than our present form of government.

It is these economic implications of regional government that concern us in this last of three editorials dealing with the Minister of Municipal Affairs' proposals for regional government in Peel and Halton counties.

The marriage of Peel and Halton counties would necessitate a wedding of the financial resources and liabilities. Since everyone looks at regional government through a selfish pair of spectacles, people in the two counties want to know if they will "win" or "lose" in the process. A quick and simple comparison of the financial implications of Peel and Halton's marriage is not possible because this area of economics seems devoid of common denominators.

To arrive at some guide for comparison, however, we gathered figures from the county treasurers of each county and other statistical references. There may be more telling comparatives but for simplicity these seemed adequate.

Assessment is a difficult base to use for comparisons and can be quite misleading. The two counties are on the same value base. Peel County, where the Assessment Commissioner system has been adopted, is partly on the market-value assessment while some areas will be from a third to a half of market value.

There are two telling comparisons that indicate to us some significant financial disadvantages in the marriage for Halton. The per capita expenditure in Peel is some

\$32 higher than in Halton and the per capita debenture debt is over \$200 higher.

Halton some time ago adopted a partial pay-as-you-go program which saw it financing many of its large projects from current revenue rather than adding debenture debt that would double the net cost of the project, even though spreading it over a number of years.

In the Plunkett Report, which quotes 1964 figures, the County of Halton paid 22.8 per cent of its total budget on debt charges but it also paid 20 per cent of its budget toward capital expenditures that might have been debentured. Peel county paid 31.7 per cent for debt charges and nothing from current for capital projects.

If the two counties are to be forced to pool their resources and liabilities there must be some protection for Halton ratepayers whose legislators have been trying to keep indebtedness down by meeting the needs of expansion from current revenue. We can find no reference in the Minister's statement that offers such protection.

Just as there are financial implications between the two counties, there are similar problems between the municipalities within the counties. A marriage for instance, between Georgetown and Acton will have inequities. Acton has maintained an enviable residential-industrial assessment relationship. On the other hand, Georgetown has seen residential construction spiral and will be forced to meet the climbing costs of urban needs. How this kind of problem will be resolved requires keener economic minds than ours.

The other significant economic aspect of regional government is the dimension of bureaucracy that will be required to operate it. How large a civil service, how many high priced administrators and what organizational structure will be necessary? The minister's statement offers no insight on this phase of the marriage and the possibility of a hydra-headed monster being created should not be overlooked.

We would like to see the elector provided, as the Ontario Economic Council suggests, with understandable indications of how much the package will cost, and how it compares with what we now have.

	Peel County	Halton County
Total expenditures in 1968.....	\$ 3,377,000.00	\$ 2,357,305.00
Debentures outstanding (excluding schools).....	\$ 10,266,140.00	\$ 5,392,071.00
Assessment (as equalized in 1968).....	\$371,591,259.00	\$365,169,374.00
Population (reported in 1967).....	188,566	160,256
Per capita assessment.....	\$ 1,970.00	\$ 2,279.00
Per capita expenditures.....	\$ 179.00	\$ 147.00
Per capita debenture debt.....	\$ 544.43	\$ 336.46

from The Canadian Champion, Milton, Ont.

Another view ...

Like a voice in the wilderness, we mention frequently in our editorials about government spending, deficit budgeting and the seeming inability of our senior governments to use even the simplest rules of business in conducting our public affairs.

Last week Premier Robarts sounded off in a speech that Ontario must be given a larger share of tax money collected by Ottawa, or he will be forced to levy more taxes himself. He didn't explain where Ottawa was going to get the money.

Wouldn't it be better for Mr. Robarts to take a look at what some of his ambitious young cabinet ministers are doing with our tax money—education minister Bill Davis, for one, who must take the blame for today's astronomical education costs.

While Mr. Robarts expresses concern about deficits out of one corner of his mouth, out of the other he talks about bilingual high schools. He allowed a ridiculous system of tax rebates to property owners and tenants which cost extra thousands to set up departments to deal with complaints. He set up pay scales for elected officials of municipalities and school boards which are completely absurd.

Isn't it time our provincial government took a long, hard look

ahead, and a long, hard look back to the days before we had a 5 per cent sales tax on top of an 11 per cent sales tax. It might be refreshing, for a change, to be able to announce a tax reduction.—The Georgetown Herald.



BALL TEAM that played for Guelph had Acton members, but they're not identified in this old picture. Does anyone recognize a relative?



Long shadows in the swamp



Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

My mind is so scrambled right now that I'll be lucky if I can write three understandable sentences.

I've been trying to explain to my daughter, in an hour or so, such things as Marxism and Communism, why the Russian and Chinese types are different, where Fidel Castro fits in, why, where and when the nation of Israel was created, and why the Jews, notably non-belligerent for about 15 centuries, have a chip the size of a brick on their shoulders these days.

From there we wandered to Mahatma Ghandi, the Congo, nationalism in Africa, separatism in Canada, the Black Power movement in the States, growing anti-semitism among Negroes, and her biology test on the dissection of rats, which takes place tomorrow morning.

Golly, it would be nice to have once again a little girl, who asked such simple questions as, "Dad, does God have to go to the bathroom?"

It all began with a discussion of the student militants at universities. She is appalled at the violence of the hard core of "pacifists" who, lurking in the forefront of all the young idealists and the middle-aged "liberals", deliberately resort to violence in their efforts to catch headlines, be martyrs, and destroy an idea which has taken almost 1,000 years to build.—The University.

Thankfully, we agreed that violence begets violence, and that neither of us wants any part of the whole stupid business.

Admittedly, the universities are sitting ducks. Over the years, they have grown as sleepy and fat and insolent as an old tom-cat who has been "fixed".

They have almost taken pride in their administrative inefficiency, their moribund traditions, their coyness with The Establishment. Write a letter to a university. Three weeks later you will receive a reply, either a form letter or something completely alien to what you asked.

And admittedly, students, universally, have always been among the vanguard of rebels against the system, political or social. That's because they are idealistic,

and are inclined to see things in blacks and whites (or today, blacks and reds).

But the fact remains that the universities, over the years, have become the only truly free centres (albeit limit) of sound criticism of society and its ills, in addition to their normal function of teaching people to think and/or learn a professional skill.

And another fact remains. The universities, on the whole, under pressure from within and without, have made a tremendous effort to rouse themselves from their stately torpor and scramble into the twentieth century. Even though it's two-thirds over.

In the process, they have leaned over backwards to free themselves of the rigid, puritan traditions of even 20 years ago. When I was there, living in men's residence, we were allowed to bring girls into the place once a year, on a Sunday afternoon, for a heavily chaperoned cocoa and cookie party in the common room. Now, wow!

I'm not advocating a return to those days, when university men and women were treated like bright juveniles who were basically sex-fiends and alcoholics.

But I am dismayed to see these once-great institutions covering and cringing under the attacks of malcontented, Marxist wolf-cubs who represent a fraction of student opinion.

As Mordecai Richler pointed out recently, the real yuk of the whole affair is that while the student activists endorse anything, up to the burning of buildings, they are scared stiff lest they get a police record, which would be a serious detriment when they try to get a job in the system they are trying to destroy.

The solution? Kick out the hard-nosed boys and girls, for whom democracy is a sham anyway. Sock it to them with the law when they disturb the peace or commit vandalism. And get back to the business of educating, or teaching to think, the vast majority who want those things.

So now I'm a fascist, and a tool of the imperialistic press. I knew it at heart.

Free Press back Issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 3, 1949.

Born Hurst, at Guelph General Hospital on Tuesday, March 1, to Mr. and Mrs. N. Hurst, a son.

Born, Allan, at Guelph General Hospital on Friday, February 18, to Mr. and Mrs. Grant Allan, a son.

Last Thursday, Billy Geer and Theresa Arbie found items stolen from the home of G. A. Dills and the car-keys of Albert Loutill taken the same evening, thrown under a tree of the Main St. bridge. A reward has been posted for any information leading to the arrest of the criminal or criminals.

The Lenten season began yesterday and Easter is but six weeks distant. Even the first day of spring is but 17 days ahead. British Week is being observed this week at the Romy Theatre, where all British pictures are being shown. Both chapters of the I.O.D.E. spoke on their work for the empire.

St. Alban's Choir presented a three act musical comedy "The Minister's Aunt" to a capacity audience in the town hall last Friday. Mr. Charles Cutts was master of ceremonies. Players included Les Duby, Alice Duby, Bill Denny, Caroline Oakes, Vic Britton, Mrs. Frank Oakes, Ed Footitt, Marjorie Fountain, Lila Ranney. Dialogue was in charge of Esther Taylor.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 1, 1894.

Acton Tanning Co.'s works were closed down a couple of days while new machinery was put in.

Delegates were billed in the homes of Milton's best citizens. Attending from Acton were Rev. Roe, Rev. Edge, Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Moore, Mrs. C. S. Smith, Mrs. Jaa. McLam, Mrs. I. Francis, Mrs. A. Stephenson, Mrs. D. Henderson, Mrs. Willie Brown, Mrs. W. Williams, Misses Madge Matthews, Lottie Speight, Lottie Hemstreet, Messrs. H. B. Henderson, R. J. Gurney and Rev. Cook.

From Ballinfad-F. S. Near, John McLean, Cowan Shortill, Miss Shortill. From Esqueping-Wm. Hampshire, J. H. Douglas, M. Douglas.

James McDonald, a Nasawagweya farmer, died of his injuries after being struck by a train at the Crewson Crosses crossing. Surgical skill was speedily obtained but to no avail. The neighbors took turns watching at his bedside and endeavored to aid in his distress. An inquest was held with those on the Jury Jno. Cripps, Jas. Stephenson, Wm. Anderson, Nicholas Forbes, W. M. Cripps, Robt. Allan, Wm. Bennett, John Crewson, James Clark, Alex. McIntosh, W. Moore, Howard Moore, James Moore Sr. and James Moore, Jr.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 6, 1919.

The high school honor roll: Duff Wilson, Jessie Mowat, Elsie Stewart, Annie Syder, Luena Campbell, Clara Lantz, Berse Woodhall, Neil Gibbins, Violet Smith, Stella McLam, John Waldie, Lloyd Kenney, George Anderson, Ray Agnew, Willie Ross, Harold Kenney, Willie Stewart, James Tolman, Max Bell, Isabel Elliott, Edna Johnston, Hazel McDonald, Ethel Starkman, Frances Hurst, Martha Orr, Willie Robertson, Ida Bewick, Sabra Nelson, Violet Davis, Margaret McNabb, Alice James, Mary Gibbins, George Taylor, Helen Anderson, Jessie Mann, Isabel McNiven, Mary Clarridge, Jack Robertson, Pearl Wallace, Harold Wansbrough, Elsie Lappin, Jessie Russell, J. C. Lindsay, Charlie Mann, Charlie Anderson, Charlie Symon, Willie Kaley, Isobell Watkins, May Willoughst.

George Cook arrived home and Frederick St. neighbors had the street decorated with flags, bunting and mottoes. County council passed the anti-Daylight Saving resolution 8-3.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Canadian Champion, Milton, Feb. 25, 1869.

On the morning of Wednesday, the 10th inst., at half past five o'clock, the large frame house owned and occupied by Mr. James R. Switzer of Norval was destroyed by fire. It is supposed that the fire originated in some ashes which were kept in a barrel in the shed. The alarm was given at once, but by the time assistance arrived the flames had made their progress so much that it was found impossible to subdue them. The furniture was partially saved, but as is usually the case, was badly injured while being removed. We regret to add that the greater part of Mr. Switzer's bedding and wearing apparel was destroyed by the flames. There was no insurance on either house or furniture. We are sure Mr. Switzer has the sympathy of the entire community, as his loss is a heavy one, the house being one of the finest in the township of Esqueping. We understand that the inhabitants of Norval and vicinity have kindly offered to rebuild the house, but Mr. Switzer declines to accept this generous offer.

Salt and Pepper

by hartley coles



For those of you who were kind enough to enquire about the whereabouts of this column last week, I'd like to mention that it was still in the old cranium and rather reluctant to spin itself out on paper. We were rushing around here trying to catch up with the work and get some of the following week's done also so we could make a trip to Ottawa last Thursday for the Ontario Weekly Newspapers Convention.

Made it. But the first casualty of the effort was last week's pillar of wisdom. Second effect was a lassitude which hasn't been replaced by the usual sporadic bursts of energy yet.

One of the highlights of the Ottawa trip was a visit to the House of Commons for the question and answer period. This is the session where the opposition usually throws the balls, the government side of the house fields, sometimes lashing back with a clothes line double or a foul tip.

On this particular Friday morning there was a galaxy of stars in the Commons. None other than the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, was the star of the government side, assisted by cabinet ministers Edgar Benson and Mitchell Sharp.

Batting for the opposition were the leader of the opposition, Robert Stanfield, John Diefenbaker, George Hees, Tommy Douglas and Stanley Knowles.

It started out casually enough. The prime minister, a picture of sartorial nonchalance, tan trousers and co-ordinated sports coat, stood up to announce that he would visit U. S. president Richard Nixon March 24 and 25.

This announcement created a stampede for the exits from the press gallery, like a scene from the flickers where the comely girl on trial for her life has just been freed by an unsympathetic jury. Likely the press corps was merely running for the telephones to get the news into the afternoon editions. But it injected a little touch of drama into the proceedings.

After questions on the visit were exhausted, the Hon. John Diefenbaker stood on his feet. The House hushed as the strong tremolo of Mr. Diefenbaker's probing question was absorbed by an attentive audience.

Mr. Diefenbaker, as rigid and primly dressed as the prime minister had been casual and nonchalant, asked if there was any foundation to the suggestion that Her

Majesty the Queen and Prince Charles, following his investiture as Prince of Wales, would be visiting Canada this fall. And did the prime minister invite them?

Mr. Trudeau executed a little shrug and admitted he had not discussed the idea with Her Majesty. Then, said Mr. Diefenbaker, would the prime minister give consideration to inviting the Queen of Canada and the prospective King of Canada at the earliest possible date following the investiture?

You can see where Mr. Diefenbaker's question was loaded. He had phrased it neatly to embarrass the government. If Mr. Trudeau answered too readily and with disdain he could easily antagonize the royalist cause in his own party. If he agreed too readily with the suggestion, the French M.P.'s might think he was kowtowing to English royalty.

It looked like the Speaker of the House might rescue Mr. Trudeau when he recognized "the hon. member from Broadview" as the next speaker. But Mr. Diefenbaker persisted.

"Mr. Speaker," he thundered, "the Prime Minister was ready to answer. He is always willing to answer. I wonder why some other member was called. It was a perfectly proper question to ask, even today in Canada." The last was said somewhat sardonically.

Spectators in the galleries awaited Mr. Trudeau's retort expectantly. The House was silent.

Mr. Trudeau stood. One hand on his desk, the other gesturing slightly, he answered in a measured tone, slightly acid.

"The question is would I give consideration and the answer is I would. I had the pleasure of meeting the Prince in London. I must say that he struck me as being a very likeable, remarkable young man and very mature and pleasant... for his age."

The answer brought down the House. The M.P.'s thumped their desks. The galleries cheered. Neither sides of the royal fence could interpret the answer as offending them.

Mr. Diefenbaker sat, a slight grin on his face. He recognized the astute answer, too.

Democracy at work. It turns out, can be a heck of a lot of fun with sharp wit from both sides of the House.

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