

Free Press Editorial Page

A flag of truce . . .

The storm Esqueing Council raised by urging cuts in honoraria for school board members and reduced administration salaries, has not abated. Now the secondary school teachers have joined the fray asking that administrative salaries be reduced to the level of the teachers' and that administrators be obliged to spend at least part of their time teaching.

It is obvious both from the storm raised by the Esqueing suggestions and the reaction of the secondary school teachers that there is more dissatisfaction with the new County Board of Education than was realized.

But we are beginning to think that the entire issue Esqueing raised is being clouded over by internal disputes and indulgence in petty back-biting.

The real issue as we see it is whether the community can afford the amount of money being spent on education.

If the cost of education is so great that a municipality cannot afford ordinary maintenance on roads, sidewalks and needed extensions to services, then it is too high.

If education costs have soared to the point where the taxpayer has difficulty meeting the commitments on the education end of the tax bill, then there should be some serious thought given to cutting costs.

We don't doubt for one moment

that if some of the administrators on the county board were in similar jobs in industry they would receive less money in their pay envelopes. No doubt others would be making more money. But these are intangibles which cannot be resolved by wrangling.

The province is committed to the new county school boards and it is likely we will never go back to the old system whether or not we are convinced it was better. So we are going to have to make do with the existing situation. In many respects it is superior than the "old" especially in the realm of providing equal opportunities for students.

Sometimes we are going to be upset by pompous and overbearing pronouncements from all sides of the educational spectrum. But let's not get too upset. Boards and municipal council should be able to co-operate and confer on problems without name calling and dragging in personalities.

Let's call a truce and see if something can't be done to solve some of the problems in the educational system and then begin to put education in its proper perspective.

There are still many people who have difficulty finding enough money to meet the rising costs of living without having additional worries over soaring taxes and squabbling authorities.

What's a girl to do? . . .

We often hear the comment that there is nothing for girls to do in the town and district; that all the recreation is geared for the boys.

This may be partially true especially when it comes to contact sports which stress physical endurance or athletics which require muscles, but people who make rash statements should qualify them. There are activities for women and girls such as skating, badminton, bowling, gymnastics, sewing, cards, bingo, dancing and chasing boys here and in the district.

Perhaps some girls are not interested in any of these activities. Maybe they would prefer more sophisticated pursuits like debutante parties, ballroom dancing, tennis, a good game of post office or spin the bottle.

The candid duke . . .

When the Duke of Edinburgh suggested Canadians should make up their own minds about the monarchy and part amicably - if parting were their wish - a section of the British press was quite upset, The Financial Post comments.

Some ultra-royal Britons, moreover, felt that Prince Philip was treating monarchy and commonwealth much too lightly. This reaction is in sharp contrast to the relative indifference of Canadians to the consort's remark.

It was not always thus, if the evidence of the late Lord Tweedmuir may be believed. At the time of the Simpson divorce followed by the abdication of

We must admit there does seem to be a dearth of places to participate in this type of recreation. And the future doesn't look too bright, either.

Used to be that all a girl wanted was to stay home and help her mother. The odd tear-jerking movie was thrown in for recreation. There was always plenty to do at home and the lady of the house always appreciated help.

Now with the modern labor saving appliances, a gal isn't needed nearly as much. If she wants to see a sad movie she has to go out of town. There are no movie houses here.

It is ironic, however, that even in the large cities where recreation and amusement is available for every taste, they still complain there is nothing to do.

Edward VIII in 1936, Tweedmuir, then Governor-General of Canada, wrote: "Canada is the most puritanical part of the Empire and cherishes very much the Victorian standards of life. She has a special affection and loyalty for the King. Canada's pride has been deeply wounded by the tattle in the American press."

"One may wonder how much Tweedmuir's judgment of Canada was influenced by his contact with its prime Minister, Mackenzie King."

After making all allowances, it remains obvious that King's Canada was much more shockable about the monarchy than is Trudeau's.



"I'm clean as the driven snow"



Sugar and Spice

by bill smiley

Most teachers become very fond of certain students. And, believe it or not, some students become very fond of certain teachers.

This was made painfully clear to me over the weekend. I became involved with a veritable spate of my former students. They're all at university now and each was going through some part of the particular hell that that involves.

It began on Friday afternoon. Gerry appeared at my classroom door, looking like a rabbit that has just had a run in with a wolf. While the class I was about to teach chattered about what they were going to do tonight, chewed their gum, waved their mini-skirted legs, or dropped into a deep slumber, Gerry told me his troubles.

He is one of the nicest boys, and one of the weakest English students, it has ever been my fate to encounter. He's the kid who rushed about last June and bought me a bottle of burgundy and six golf balls after receiving the incredible news that he'd passed in English.

His only problem Friday was that he had three essays to write in six days. He was looking for a life belt. I was fresh out of them, but gave him some reference books, some sympathy and some ideas on how to tackle his essays.

I don't think he has a hope in heaven of passing his semester, under those conditions, but he's learned something; you don't wait until an essay is breathing down your neck before you write it.

That very night, another former student called her mom, who lives across the street from us. She wanted to know if the Smileys were going to be home for the weekend. If so, she was coming home, because she had to see Mr. Smiley.

She has graduated and is attending a college of education, purportedly learning to be a high school teacher. Her problem was a little different. She had to teach some poetry this week, as part of that 20th century form of the Spanish Inquisition known as "practice teaching." This involves facing a class of strange students, with an eagle-eyed professional teacher watching from the back of the room. Harrowing is the word.

So I spent Saturday afternoon going over the poems with her and getting her all muddled up. But she left with a pile of notes and the feeling that she could survive the ordeal.

Horse sense

The quickest way to become convinced that spanking is unnecessary is to become a grandparent.

The best way to wipe out a friendship is to sponge on it.

Just because the speed limit signs on Highway 401 say "Maximum 70" doesn't mean we HAVE to drive at 70 m.p.h. Most drivers travel at the speed that "feels right" to them according to prevailing conditions.

Sunday afternoon I met two more former students, under different circumstances. I couldn't help them with their work. It was in a funeral home and their mother was dead, tragically, after a brief illness. I kissed the girls and hugged them. There wasn't anything else to do or say.

Sunday night, one of them, Liz, closest friend of our daughter since Grade 7, came around and spent two hours talking with my wife and me. Not weeping, just talking in her sensible, sweet, 19-year-old way.

And last of all, there was another former student, my own kid, Kim, staggering around in that horrible chaos of first-year university. Bell Telephone stock took another good shot in the arm when her mother called her Sunday night.

She had just discovered that she'd been missing two biology lectures a week, all fall, because they weren't on her timetable. And maybe this was the reason she wasn't doing so well in biology. And she has an exam in it this week and she knows she'll fail and she'd like nothing better than to quit the whole silly business and get a job as a waitress.

And that's the way it goes, if you're a teacher. I've been at it for only ten years, but in that time I've found very few youngsters who are vile or despicable. There are some. But most of them are funny, confused, lost, brash, shy, aggressive, kooky.

It's only when they become adults that they seem to turn into pompous bores, nagging wives, stuffed shirts, shrews, gossips and all manner of unpleasant creatures of both sexes.

Perhaps there's a great universal truth in there somewhere. But I can't find it. However, it makes up for a lot of the frustration and nerve-rending days of teaching when the blase, sophisticated teenagers come back to see the old man when they're in trouble.

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CALITHUMPIAN PARADE of years ago was photographed as the Acton band rounded a corner. This picture is one of several sent for this editorial page column with the notation it need not be returned.

Free Press back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, November 24, 1949.

Another of Acton's industries has found larger quarters for the expanding business. Plastonics Ltd. which has operated in the same building with Micro Plastics since establishing in Acton has taken over the garage floor premises of Mr. E. Jeanning. Mr. Roy Lambert, who has operated the Acton garage has gone to Desjard. The building was the first Ford agency in Acton.

At the council meeting the clerk presented the official orders from the Municipal Board erecting Acton into a town and the approval of the Zoning By-law. Acton is now a town known as "The Corporation of the town of Acton." Acton Public Utilities Commission learned a new pump has been installed at the spring.

The Home and School Association meeting had two speakers, Mr. W. Middleton who spoke on the school board, and Mr. Skuce, public school inspector. The playground equipment project committee, headed by Mr. H. Skilling, was authorized to spend up to \$75 for equipment.

A former resident of Acton, Mr. James Talman, Chief Librarian of the University of Western Ontario, was the guest speaker at the Rotary meeting.

At a meeting this week the building committee of Messrs. R. R. Parker, William Coon, K. Mackenzie and Theron Jones were asked to get plans ready and an approximate cost of the Acton Swimming Pool and present it to council January 18.

Lorne Garner this week opened his new garage at the corner of Main and West Lower Ave. He has the General Motors Line. He purchased the business from Bert Woods.

to the Head Master of the High School. Acton must be regarded as a very desirable point on the cross-province route for an aerodrome. The Free Press received the second letter from Graham Joy, secretary of the Aero Club of Canada, expressing the hope that the matter of a municipal aerodrome is receiving consideration. The size of ground required is not less than 450 yards square. Housing accommodation for aeroplanes at the rate of one aeroplane for each 2,000 population is desired. Where possible, fair grounds may be utilized for fair purposes. It is recommended that at least one aerodrome be built in the immediate future, but Acton will likely "bide a wee" in the high-flying matter.

Mr. Fred Wilds, who was at Dunchurch hunting, has brought home a fine doe.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, November 29, 1894.

Several venturesome youths went through the ice on Henderson's Pond.

The season for the annual public gatherings of the various Sunday Schools is now rapidly advancing. Practices commence next week at the Methodist church.

A committee of Acton Temperance Union has arranged for a visit here of Miss Pauline Johnson, the well known Indian poetess and reciter. She will give her recital in the town hall.

Thanksgiving Day passed off very quietly in Rockwood. There were very few from outside to take advantage of the hunting in the vicinity. One of the holiday's attractions was the Public School commencement exercises held in the hall in the evening. A pleasing feature was the broom and doll drill by the little girls. Rev. Messrs. Strachan, Sabine and Baker gave short addresses and presented the certificates to the successful candidates in last July's examinations.

The fact is regretfully admitted by those close to Queen Victoria that her majesty must remain a cripple almost the rest of her life due to arthritis.

Due to lack of attendance at practice and meetings and disloyalty to the officers, the members of the Fire Company asked council to relieve them from further obligations. No official action was taken for re-organization and Acton is again without fire protection.

The navigation season being over on the lakes Mr. Wm. Coleman, who has been sailing this summer, is home at Crewson's corners again.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, November 27, 1919.

Edward, Prince of Wales, has left Canada, and says in his farewell message to the Governor-General, "The last four months will influence the whole of my life and I shall never be happy if many months elapse without a visit to my home on this side of the Atlantic."

Officials were here last week inspecting the radial station premises. They decided that a freight shed is to be erected in the yard east of the station. The growing express and freight business has necessitated the extension of the station platform 24 feet eastward.

A superior teacher, Miss Pearl Z. Baker has resigned from her position as assistant

Salt and Pepper
 by hartley coles

The problem of why there is pain and suffering in the world has always puzzled mankind.

One well known Toronto newspaperman and broadcaster came home from India convinced there was no God after seeing the suffering and poverty there. Others, horrified by experiences where all the bitterness and anguish of the world have been dug up for human consumption, ask how a merciful God could allow this sort of thing.

Most of us are bothered by thoughts like these through a lifetime. The ironic part is that it seems to have a directly opposite effect on different persons.

One man will, much like the story of the Samaritan in the good book, turn his head the other way and pretend he doesn't see the horror he passes.

Another man will stop and see the human condition and his heart will fill with pain. How dare you turn your creatures into wretched animals, their days filled with pain and mental anguish, he asks of the void where there is no God.

And yet another man will stop and listen for all the pain and suffering of the world and try to do something about it. That is how we get the Albert Schweitzers, the Tom Dooleys, the Vincent de Pauls, the William Booths and thousands of others who instead of turning their backs on problems, wade into them and do the best they can for the suffering.

Sometimes when we are reading we come across an article or story which illustrates the problem well and gives an insight into some of the things which bother us. This one is from Presbyterian Life (Australia) and it is good food for thought:

I walked today through the slums of life, down the dark streets of wretchedness and of pain. I trod today where few have trod and as I walked I challenged God.

I saw the sots in the bar-rooms. I saw the prostitutes in the dance halls. I saw the thieves as they picked pockets.

I saw men and women devoid of life, living in worlds of sin, and above the din I whispered:

"Why, God, Why?"

I walked today down the lane of hate, hearing the jeers of bitter men, hearing the names they cursed and spat - "Dago," "Nigger," "Kike," "Jap."

I saw the dejected men they stoned.

I felt the anguish of their cries. I saw them as they slumped the lonely, as they turned their backs on human needs. These, God called His sons! Gasping for air, I cried:

"Why, God, Why?"

I walked today through war's grim dregs-over fields of blood, over graveless men. I saw the dead, the crucified, the headless, the limbless, the pleading, the crying.

I saw the pain, the waste. I smelled the odour of rotted flesh.

I saw the children gathered round-watching, naked, hungry, weeping, diseased, dirty-the baby trying to nurse from a dead mother. The ruins-the agony-the despair! Disaster-disaster all around!

Blinded with tears, I fled down these streets, I stumbled, then stopped. I shouted:

"Why, God, Why? Why do you let man sin, hate, suffer?"

"Unmerciful Father! God, art Thou blind-art Thou wicked and cruel? God, canst Thou watch and do naught? Why must this be?"

The world grew silent. I waited, empty. The silence was heavy. I started to tremble. I waited long-half rebelling, half despair. Then I heard from close behind me:

"Why, Man, Why?"