

Georgetown Herald

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Death Penalty a Problem

Abolition or retention of the death penalty is a question which will concern the new session of parliament in Ottawa. And it is one which should trouble the conscience of every Canadian.

Whatever the outcome, the current situation is not a good one. While the law provides that a convicted murderer may be hanged, in practice it has become almost a rule that the sentence is later commuted to imprisonment. This parliamentary power is supposed to act as a safeguard against any miscarriage of justice. But it is actually being construed as a humanitarian gesture, detached altogether from the court's findings.

There are many excellent arguments for abolishing the death penalty — religious, moral and statistical. It has troubled man's conscience for generations. And one can have no absolute opinion because of the complexity of arguments.

Alcohol No Excuse

It seems to us that there is an equally serious problem in our criminal code which allows consumption of alcohol to mitigate the penalty for taking another's life whether it be a physical act or by the increasingly common use of automobiles.

Time after time we read of an auto fatality where the driver was under the influence of alcohol and escapes with a fine and suspension of his driving permit.

It would almost appear that we place a higher value on money than we do on life. It is seldom that a bank robber gets less than five or ten years in jail. Yet a life robber has a relatively minor penalty.

Our laws need some clarification in this respect. A person who has consumed alcohol to the point where he is not responsible for his actions at the time of the crime, should be still guilty of his crime. Here too, we are inclined to let our sympathies rest with the accused, and forget the victim who

Personally, we favour its retention. One must think of the police who, without the threat of death as punishment, can have their own lives endangered by a criminal who knows that his penalty can be no more severe if he pulls the trigger in a robbery. One must think of the cost to society, and the threat to officials in detention homes when convicted murderers are housed there for a lifetime. And one must think, too, of the public which deserves to be protected against a person who has taken another's life and can one day be free again to repeat his crime.

We do, however, think it is long past time when the barbaric custom of hanging should be replaced by a more humanitarian disposition of the convicted person. We do not require animals to suffer unduly for their misdeeds. And we should grant the same favours to man, no matter how heinous his crimes.

was guilty only of being in the way of a maniacal driver.

We look at it this way. The law sets speed limits. If they are exceeded, a motorist knows that he is liable to be charged and fined. A policeman uses his judgment and does not necessarily stop a motorist who exceeds the limit if he feels the motorist is using due caution and is not menacing other traffic.

Suppose the law says it is an offence to drive after drinking.

A motorist with one drink would be in the same position as a man who exceeds the speed limit by even one mile an hour. Chances are he would not be stopped, but if he were, he would know he would be subject to a penalty.

Surely our highways deserve to be as safe from drinking drivers as from speeding ones, and it is time action is taken to cut the frightful accident toll.

Glen Flood Object Lesson

If the federal government turn-down of subsidizing a series of dams along the Credit River is to be reversed, the flooding situation in Glen Williams could be used as an object lesson for their need.

Certainly major action must be taken, whoever is to foot the bill, to avoid any such problems in future. Already thousands of dollars in damage has been caused to homes and business establishments in the village. And the eventual fate of the whole valley rests on weather conditions. If the ice fields melt away gradually, residents will be happy. Mild weather and rain for any long period, however, could cause a disaster of major proportions.

Strong representations should be made immediately to Ottawa. Officials in the de-

partments concerned should be asked to visit the site, or at the least, pictorial evidence should be obtained and a report of damage compiled as evidence of the need for conservation dams.

Flooding is no isolated occurrence along the Credit as anyone knows. The present condition is probably the most severe in history, but almost every year there is similar trouble which can only be avoided by a major plan such as the conservation authority has proposed.

There is a golden opportunity at present for some good to come from the misery which the flood has caused. Every possible avenue should be explored at Ottawa and Queen's Park to draw this forcibly to the attention of those who control the public pursestrings. And immediately.



ALL READY FOR THE FACE-OFF

NEWS ECHOES

From the pages of the Herald 1954 and 1944

10 YEARS AGO

Provincial police have questioned a district man in connection with a fire at Notre Dame de Beauregard Farm which destroyed a chicken house and 25 chickens early Sunday evening. Action of young residents of the farm and neighbour Ted Darlington and his son Peter kept the fire from spreading to a large barn nearby.

One of Georgetown's most spectacular fires gutted the old Bowers Motor Sales building on the highway early Sunday morning causing damage estimated at \$20,000. Firemen kept the flames from spreading to the Georgetown Creamery which suffered some damage to the roof and minor smoke damage inside.

Coming from Oakville, John Elliott is Georgetown's new CNR station agent succeeding Arthur Cohen who has gone to Midland as night operator. Mr. Elliott is a native of Grenfell, Saskatchewan.

20 YEARS AGO

At a well-attended meeting held in the council chamber Wednesday the organization of the Stewarttown Soldiers Reception Committee was completed and general plans were made for welcoming the men as they returned. Officers appointed were Rev. S. R. Colebrook, chairman; Miss Christine Dickenson, secretary; welcoming committee, Mr. John Murray; decorating committee, Mr. W. Hulls; social committee, Mrs. John Slandish.

NEWS DESK EXTRAS

by Terry Harley

One thing occurred to us while watching the arm-flailing party game jokingly labelled dancing on television — it's sure to kill the 'learn to dance' correspondence courses. Remember the sample diagrams in the advertising? — a series of number footprints going forward, then sideways, then back. Can you imagine how the Frug or Watusi, or the Bored Stiff,

or whatever this week's version is called, would look on an instruction sheet? Two stark footprints dead in the centre of a single page — going nowhere.

What's happening to the TV interview? Time was when personality and inquiring reporter sat casually in swivel chairs opposite each other and simply conversed. Now perching guest and interrogator are planted on either side of an austere table in an atmosphere that lacks only blinding lights and rubber hose. And the queries don't follow the 'how did you get where you are, and what are your plans' line any more, but 'isn't your wife's brother the same Frank Felanick who operated a string of stills in the '20's'.

Most of the interviews we've watched and listened to lately bear too much in common with a back room grilling to be entertaining.

We don't know if this really happened but a reader swears it's true. When the librarian questioned her little boy's book choice — 'Advice to Young Mothers,' he explained, 'I need it. I've just started collecting moths and I need all the advice I can get.'

During the 'fat years' of the late Georgetown Raiders, an homme qui peuné a sports column for a top flight neighbour weekly periodically launched a barrage of printed needles at the local intermediates for their overbalance of imported talent. Now the situation has shifted and the neighbouring community has an intermediate team of its own — top heavy with outside help which the good scribe now accepts as matter of fact. We take this opportunity to return one of the harpoons.

Georgetown is going to be the centre of some very impressive goings-on in upcoming weeks with the Model

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SUGAR AND SPICE

by Bill Smiley

From Everywhere They Came

I've had a preview of what I am going to feel like when my daughter is married. I've just been through two piano recitals. Not by Glen Gould, or Van Cliburn, or Artur Schnabel. No. By Hugh Swales.

Marrying off your daughter must be just like it. A heady brew of emotion and exhaustion, bills and bouquets, that leaves you feeling like a caterpillar that has been run over, but not quite killed, by a tractor.

In short, you wind up absolutely flat, but rather proud that you're not dead.

The first recital was at the Conservatory, in the city. We picked the date six weeks before. And boy, can we pick 'em. It was 18 below zero. And the humidity and wind gave it a discomfort index of 47 below.

The Old Girl was sick. Physically, mentally, spiritually. I was sick sympathetically. We figured 35 relatives, tried and true, and five friends to whom I owed money, would turn up.

Bless the human race, and all dear friends. We had 150 in the city, straggling in, on such a night, from all over the country. Some made a round trip of 500 miles to hear the kid play.

It was a curious combination of characters in the audience. Basic were the relatives who live in the city and their friends. They made up the two score we had expected.

But then they started to trickle in: old college friends; old fighter pilots; old weekly editors; my son's former public school principal; the chap who has the mortgage on my house; the fellow who handles my columns; the orthodontist who straightens my daughter's teeth; a girl I hadn't seen since we went skinny-dipping at beach party 30 years ago. And they all, bless them, brought their wives and, or husbands, children and friends.

Last but not least came my sisters. One drove for six hours, in 29-below weather, with her daughter, to make it. The other came the same distance by train, with two kids. Neither knew the other was coming. Nel-

ther had seen the great artist since he was picked up and kissing me.

It was heart warming, to say the least. And I was a very proud father and husband, when it was over. A proud father, because my son showed a poise and polish I wish I'd had at that age, and a competence I've never had at any age. A proud husband, because my wife had crawled out of what she claimed was her death bed to get there and looked better than anybody, despite the facts that she's lived with me for 18 years, and caught the kid for ten.

Next day at noon, we hiked for home, 50 miles, and went through the whole thing again that night. A recital in the home town. It was not 30 below, for a change. It was 30 below. But 500 people left their television sets, and shivered through the night to hear my young virtuoso, as he doesn't like to be called.

What impressed me most about the whole weekend was the kindness of people. My sister-in-law wanted to hold a reception for the whole mob, in the city. Our neighbor insisted on making the sandwiches for the bash at home. Even my wife got carried away and told me, during one lapse, that I was a good husband and father, which shook me up a bit.

The only thing that's bothering me is the kid's attitude. One of my misguided friends sent him a bottle of champagne. A dear lady sent him ten bucks. And perhaps worst of all, he got a clutch of fan mail.

After the weekend, we had a heavy fall of snow. I told him to get out and shovel the driveway. He handed me a shovel and asked "How many fans letters did you get this week, Pops?" I shovelled.

BIBLE THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

"And I said, who art thou Lord? He said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Acts 26:15
The persecutions dealt to the people of God are felt by His Son.

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