

We're plain cynical . . .

Those who naively assumed the Canadian National Railway would merely remove the agents from stations they wanted to close and continue train service like it never occurred, got a rude awakening last week when the Railway Transport Committee announced they would also like to cancel the two trains which do stop in Acton each day.

The announcement had an electrifying effect up and down the line from Toronto to Guelph and there is no doubt the railway will get plenty of opposition on the move. But don't bet that the company doesn't get its own way despite the effect it will have on the public who use the daily commuter service.

Although the railway claims it is merely acting under the new dispensation which allows it to show certain lines are uneconomic to run (and thus can claim a government subsidy), their actions to date in closing needed transportation across the country shows a disregard for the general public.

Those who would swallow the propaganda about the CN losing money on a certain line are being

especially naive since it was demonstrated at the first public hearing in Acton the railway was not even sure the Acton station was making or losing money. It is doubtful they could quote figures on an entire line if they can't quote figures on the Acton station.

The railway would prefer to dump all the passengers who do use the present service onto the already congested roads into Toronto.

The thinking is backward.

More public transportation is needed into Toronto and out, not less, and it is time those who handle the transportation reins in this province were made aware of it.

Whatever happened to the public-spirited railways which built this nation and linked it from sea to sea?

Now it seems they want to discontinue services that will get more important as the years roll on.

It seems ludicrous for the railways to be urging customers to use other services, for instance, instead of trying to compete for the passenger and freight dollar.

Need advertising . . .

We were shocked, as no doubt were also many area farmers, to learn last week that the sale of winter wheat to the United Kingdom had been lost to the State of Oregon because the people in Britain didn't know of the supply of wheat available in Ontario.

This was revealed recently in Chatham by James O'Shea, of Grantan, head of the Ontario Wheat Producers Marketing Board, speaking at the United Co-operatives of Ontario 10th Annual grain marketing conference.

Mr. O'Shea said, "a breakdown in communications" and a "failure of the board" to let its customers know what stocks it had on hand accounted for losing the sale to the

United States.

"Millers in Britain didn't know the wheat board had 500,000 bushels of soft wheat for sale and consequently they bought elsewhere," he said.

Frankly, we admire Mr. O'Shea's honesty in admitting the fact, but we suggest the 18 cents per bushel of wheat deducted by the board does call for aggressive sales policy that ensures that every potential customer in Ontario wheat does now what stocks are available.

And it is little comfort for farmers, many of whom are suffering from the effects of one of the most disastrous crop years in memory, to see customers for their products buy elsewhere.—H. D. McConnell, Tilbury Times.

Sweet and sour . . .

People today—especially in the cities—have a feeling life has gone sour.

Small town and rural areas don't feel this malaise so deeply—perhaps because they live close to nature. Their people live with the seasons, see the sunrise sometimes and can watch the moon hang in the sky like a huge lantern unobstructed by skyscraping buildings.

Deeply aware of the season, knowing what they know, seeing what they see, almost unconsciously the small town person is healthier both from a physical and mental point of view.

Cities are another story says Unchurched Editorials. The people in high rise apartments, insulated in small suburban homes, cheek-by-jowl to large buildings of concrete and

glass—begin to lose the feeling of nature. It is an artificial environment.

Season are snow tires, antifreeze and long lines of traffic, or dull, heat-laden days where the occasion relief of an air conditioned office is appreciated by the city dweller.

Man has an instinct to get back to the country to find out who and what he is—to rest and relax—to feel the warmth, strength and danger of nature. These are a few of the basic reasons Canadians must guard and expand wilderness areas and parkland. We need them to keep our sanity.

We must support efforts to keep the natural environment free of pollution, liveable, beautiful, accessible and a haven for the strife-torn urban dweller.



ALL EYES OF hockey fans are on the National Hockey League playoff race. Although the Toronto Maple Leafs are out of contention, they still have a mathematical chance of making the charmed circle. Here, in a recent game against Los Angeles Kings, Jim Jennings' camera captured the action as the Leafs adopt the "spoiler" role. Toronto still is a decisive factor in determining which teams make the playoffs.

ACTON, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 1970



Sugar and Spice by bill smiley

This has been quite a winter, in more ways than one. Cold, snow, cold, snow. When it wasn't cold enough to freeze the brains of a brass monkey, God, or the weatherman, or somebody, let fly with the confetti as though it were the biggest wedding in the world.

And I'm stuck with three females: A broody wife, a moody daughter, and a pregnant cat. So things haven't exactly looked up as spring hides well around that corner.

However, there are always bright spots, and I've had a fair share of them. Terry Barker took me to task, in a long, intelligent letter in rebuttal to a rather disgruntled column I wrote about teaching. He didn't convince me, but let's say that I am a little more disgruntled than I was.

There are deep and satisfying rewards in teaching, along with the frustration, red tape and the feeling that you're hopelessly entangled in a huge cobweb. There's a real thrill in seeing young people grapple and grope with new ideas, and light up as the ideas get through.

Then I had a thoughtful letter from a Qualicum Beach, B.C., reader enclosing a clipping from the North Battleford (Sask.) News-Optimist stating that "Bill Smiley is by far our most popular syndicated columnist." That's great for the old ego, which needs a little balm once in a while.

Another ego-booster was an invitation to speak to the Vimy Branch, Royal Canadian Legion, a unique organization in London, Ont. It meets only twice a year, to observe Remembrance Day and Vimy Day. A charming and kind chap called Joyce Roadhouse made the contact, pointing out that it was a toss-up between me and some Major-General. The branch it studied with Brigadiers, Colonels and Wing Commanders, and there was a terrible temptation to take advantage of this chance to stand up and tell the brass what I've always thought of them. But I had to decline.

However, the brightest spot of all has been the tremendous and moving response to a recent column about my daughter. Every day letters have been coming in from all over Canada, full of sympathy and warmth. Many of them have been addressed to Kim herself.

Old friends have rallied round, and complete strangers have taken time to write cheering, encouraging letters and cards. This has not restored my faith in human nature, because I've never lost it, but it has bolstered it.

Here's an excerpt from a typical letter. "Whatever happens, don't blame yourselves. It's very easy to do this as parents. You did what most of us try to do—you taught her to stand on her own feet—and let her go. She fell. So she'll get up again and be twice the girl she was before."

And here's another "Dear Bill: Detected grave concern beneath your casual request for a prayer. I have solicited our Father on your daughter's behalf and I feel that He has answered your prayer. May God bless you and yours in the name of His son Jesus Christ." That was all from a complete stranger.

From Red Deer came a long letter full of scriptural comfort and the assurance that his (or her) prayers would be with us. Others sent prayers that had helped them in time of trouble.

This is only a sampling. I am not an emotional or sentimental person. My wife calls me Old Stoneface. But it has touched me deeply that so many people have tried to communicate with, and help, a stranger. Sometimes a columnist feels that he is writing in a great, cold void. It's not a good feeling.

Now I know better, and I will be of good heart. Meanwhile, we live a day at a time, the sun shines, spring is on its way. Thank you all. It's good to know that there is still a great deal of human kindness in a world that sometimes looks a bit bleak.

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Salt and Pepper



by hartley coles

We left Maggie Stilllegs and her new-found in-law, fearless Phil Crane, on a bench in front of city hall in Toronto last week, discussing the mysterious disappearance of Maggie's husband just plain Bill after his discharge from the Lorne Scots. Maggie hadn't seen just plain Bill since he left her in the lurch many years ago, fading into second line fog one Friday in February. Her heart leaped when fearless Phil filled her in with details of Bill's life since he evaporated and she was determined now to track her shiftless fellow down with the help of fearless Phil, who made a fortune producing bicultural cookies in Montreal.

"Maggie," fearless Phil said turning to the distraught lady whose feelings on just plain Bill were very evident on her face, "I think I may know where the bouncer is."

"Now I want you to get a room for the night, and tomorrow morning we're going to take a trip. Meanwhile, I'll phone some friends here in Toronto and stay with them. I'll meet you on this bench again tomorrow morning sharp at 9."

With these directions fearless Phil bounded from the bench with new meaning in his step. He faded into the late afternoon crowd which started to infiltrate the city hall court yard.

Maggie watched him go with a tug of loneliness. She would have liked to have called Phil back but her shyness, acquired after years of living alone, inhibited speech and she waved him goodbye with a flutter of fingers.

Then she took off into the crowd herself, a subdued but reflective figure, among the jostling Bay and Queen crowds. She crossed the street with the light and, after a quick look around for a quiet retreat, went into a small tavern along Queen St.

Events of the day flooded her head with thoughts. Perhaps the best thing she could do would be to step on the next bus and head back to Acton. But Maggie Stilllegs was made of sterner stuff. She wanted just plain Bill Crane back even if she had to go to the end of the world.

Gulping a supper of liver and onions down and polishing off three cups of tea, she felt much better when she emerged from the tavern to find a room for the night. She trudged down Queen, turned down Yonge until she sighted the "King Eddie" a hostelry whose delights she always yearned to sample.

Yes, the desk clerk said, she could have a single room, for princely price of \$18, a sum Maggie thought inflated. But she was too tired to argue. Her luggage? She told the clerk it got lost on a Greyhound bus. Perhaps she giggled to herself, I really am going to the dogs.

She wasn't long settling into bed in her slip, making sure the night latch was on the door, the bolt slipped and a chair lodged under the knob. She checked the window, surmising it would take a human fly to climb 10 storeys.

With one last look at—the Toronto skyline, Maggie dropped into bed, only arising once more to shove the chest of drawers against the door in the event other measures failed to deter would-be masher.

Maggie spent a sleepless night despite the comfortable bed.

She dreamed of just plain Bill and the walks they used to take to the Breezes, over the old "big bridge," the lunches they used to pack for picnics under the tall elms on Warren Grove.

The voice of Rudy Vallee kept coming back much of the night. She dreamed of dances she and Bill attended at the pavilion over Blue Springs, the radial rides back with a few of the more noisy young people from Acton. When her mental alarm rang silently in the lonely room she arose, quickly washed and dressed as the sun rose over the waters of Lake Ontario and the city noises hummed.

She was waiting for fearless Phil at the city hall—after a breakfast of Danish pastry and strong coffee. Without a word he grabbed her hand and they started for the bus station. They boarded a bus and Maggie settled back to watch the city go by. Soon they were out of the city and into the country.

"Where are we going, Phil?" she asked as the bus headed towards the Caledon hills.

"You'll see, Maggie," he purred, grabbing her hand and squeezing. Maggie's first thoughts were to wrench her hand back but she let him hold it and when the bus glided to a stop at the Forks of the Credit she didn't object when fearless Phil leaned over and brushed her cheeks with his lips.

For the first time in over 30 years, Maggie started to wonder whether she wanted to find just plain Bill.
(to be continued)

Free Press back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 16, 1950.

The first annual Father and Son banquet for Scouts and Cubs by the Y's Men was attended by 170. Y's Men president Ken Mackenzie gave a cordial welcome. Toasts were given by Bill McHugh and Claude Cook. Charles Kirkness led in songs. George Mason had a bag full of tricks and the guest speaker was Cons. Oxham of the R.C.M.P.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Masales marked their 50th wedding anniversary. Both have spent their entire lives in Acton.

A men's club was organized at Rockwood United church and on the executive are honorary presidents Rev. W. J. Oliver and Dr. R. O. Jolliffe, president Ralph Hodgson; vice-present Ross Gordon; secretary George Day; treasurer Stanley Harris; publicity Thos. Gallatly.

Crawford Douglas, who has been working very diligently, has received his King's Scout badge.

The high school hockey team lost by one point to Milton. Acton players were Anderson in goal with Barr, Bruce, Greer, Ware, Davidson Tyler, Sommerville, Hutt, Rumley, Davidson and Dawkins. Mac Sprowl has been in St. Joseph's hospital, Guelph with appendicitis. Acton Redmen shook a three game jinx to win 9-2 against Milverton Tuesday and they're still in the playoffs. With Fred Kentner more his former self, Harold Townsley back on defense and young Bill Hutt centering Mowat and Bastell, the Acton club was aggressive yet cautious.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 18, 1920.

The first places at the county stock judging contests at Milton last Friday were again won by Acton young men. W. J. McDonald, son of William McDonald Esq., fourth line, succeeded in defeating the whole list of contestants throughout the whole county. W. J. won the Shorthorn calf, shield and diploma.

Second place was won by Stuart Lowrie, son of Robert Lowrie Esq. of the fifth line.

Last Thursday evening the big transformer at the Hydro power house which supplied the series of street lamps on Bower Ave., Church St. and intervening

and outside districts, burned out and these streets have been in darkness every evening since. Electrician Wilson is doing his utmost to get repairs effected but owing to scarcity of material this is very difficult to accomplish. It is unfortunate that the break came just when the snow went off and a new moon of meagre rays had only come in.

On Laymen's Sunday at the Methodist church, excellent addresses were given by Miss Minnie Z. Bennett and Mr. J. M. Roszell.

The mail order houses are active again, flooding the country with catalogues. But they do not offer to exchange their goods for eggs, poultry, butter or produce. They make you pay cash. They pay no taxes into our municipal treasury, they do not contribute to our churches, they send your ready money to Toronto and ask credit from Acton Merchants? When a depression comes Toronto will have lots of money and the country will be hard up.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, March 14, 1895

The lunar eclipse was seen in this vicinity under very favorable conditions.

Mr. Ezra Adams, who resided for many years in Acton, died in Drayton where he resided with his nephews. He experienced many trials in the death of all his family.

The new spring veiling makes a girl look as though she had caught her head napping and put it in a cage for safekeeping.

The last checker match of the season will be played by the Acton Checker Club next Thursday evening in their rooms on Mill St.

The entrance at Fairview cemetery was blocked with snow this week, the first time since it was opened. An hour's work will give a passable road.

Ontario Fish and Game association has decided to give a bounty of 50 cents a head for foxes, owing to the damage they afflict on farmers' poultry.

While driving the remains of Miss Annie Swackhamer from Milton last Thursday the hearse of Mr. McPherson, undertaker, was upset on the second line and one of the plate glass panels in the side was broken. She was in her 17th year and succumbed in a few hours from acute inflammation while visiting friends.

Miss Gerie Cookman's spirit took its flight while she was visiting her uncle in Acton. A severe cold settled on her lungs and developed into consumption. She was 21 years of age and a devoted Christian, much beloved by those who knew her.

Photos from the past



THE Y.M.C.A. players presented here comes Charlie in 1936 . . . and here comes the cast: front row Laura McMullen, Meryl Grindell, Charles Kirkness, Flora Sayers, Oral Chalmers, Jimmie Ross; second row

George Mason, Albert Mills, Mary Chalmers, Gordon Cook, Rita McNabb, John Savage, Helen Cook, Mrs. A. J. Buchanan, Colin MacColl.