



SCOTLAND MAY HAVE its Loch Ness monster but how about this strange creature observed by Free Press photographer Jim Jennings along the escarpment at nearby Speyside? It was last seen pointing its neck towards Acton, although leaving no prints in the snow.

## Bill Smiley



Not too long ago, I wrote a column suggesting what would happen if housewives went on strike. A long, intelligent and often witty letter from Mason Bailey, President of the Huron County Federation of Agriculture tells me bluntly that there is another species in our society which, if it went on strike, would make a housewives' strike look like a box luncheon.

Naturally, he is talking about farmers. Farmers are like the weather: Everybody talks about them but nobody does anything.

I'll quote bits from his letter, and make some comments. He asks tersely, "What if all the farmers went on strike? ... Most of society and the majority of columnists seem to have forgotten that farmers continue to exist. And that is just what farmers are doing! Existing! Net farm income in Ontario has dropped over thirty per cent in the last three years. In 1971, Canadian farmers received less than ten per cent of the money that Canadian consumers spent on food."

Well, Mr. Bailey, I'll accept your figures, for a start. And they certainly don't make me want to plunge into farming with a \$30,000 mortgage and the prospect of working 10 or 12 hours a day, six days a week.

On the other hand, like all figures, they can be misleading. How many Canadian farmers grow coffee, tea, fish, sugar, pepper, peanut butter, oranges, bananas and all the other items that beef up our food bills?

Another of your points strikes a sympathetic chord in me. "I was in a restaurant last week. The menu said one egg, 50c. Do you know what farmers got for eggs last week? 22c a dozen for Grade A

large; 7c a dozen for cracks." This is utterly ridiculous, and somebody, obviously the farmer, is being shafted. The only solution I can see is to demand "cracks" in restaurants. Which is probably what we get in some places anyway.

I share completely your burning wrath at restaurant prices. And now let's sit back and hear a howl of protest from the restaurant owners, who are starving to death. The average one isn't, and works long hours for a decent living. But those room service prices in hotels drive me right out of my skull. \$1.65 for a sandwich. \$1.50 for a pot of lukewarm coffee.

You go back to the war, when sugar and butter were rationed and otherwise honest people would cheat, lie or steal to get enough or more than enough. And you say it would happen again if farmers went on strike. I agree. Some would, but a minority. In my opinion, I think the farmers would get a good deal of sympathy and support, just as the coal miners did in England, despite the hardships their strike imposed on millions.

In such an event, you suggest that "bootlegging food at inflated prices would become as common as drug peddling. The bootlegging farmers would start to show a profit. Some might even be able to hire help at the minimum wage." Surely, right there is one spot where government could help — by subsidizing farm wages.

The government subsidizes practically everything else that even approaches work, or simply pays people not to work. Surely, the next logical step would be to make farm work attractive, financially, rather than paying farmers not to grow grain, or spuds, or whatever. However, we mustn't mention government and logic in the same breath.

You mention something that depresses me — that the average age of farmers in Ontario is about 55, that not many young men can start farming under today's conditions, and that even if they can, the liberated little woman has other ideas. And you also point out rather pungently that if the average age of housewives "was 55 and no replacements forthcoming, you would have something to scream about." You're right. The scream that would echo across the land would be apocalyptic.

Another point in your argument is that corporations may take over food production. "If wealthy corporations ever replace the family farm and hire organized labor, there probably will be food strikes." That is an appalling thought.

Would that mean that I couldn't buy one of those "chickens" that taste no more like chicken than my old running-shoes, unless you plaster them with some synthetic flavoring? Would it mean that I couldn't buy any of that enriched bread that tastes like wet kleenex? Life just wouldn't be worth living.

However, I agree with your premise that the farmer has been left sucking the hind teat in these years of inflation. I think the chief trouble is the same as that of the housewives: farmers are too stubborn and individualistic to get really organized. They should, perhaps, set up their own co-ops, processing, handling and sales organizations. That, of course, would leave us with mobs of unemployed middle-men.

But my heart is with you, chaps, and will be even the next time I pick up a \$1.49 a pound hunk of steak, look at it wistfully, replace it, and reach for the hamburger.



by Hartley Coles

## COLES' SLAW

I had a different kind of experience the other day, the type of outing that makes one want the winter to stick around and Spring to put on the brakes.

Reeve Warren Parkinson and his Erasmus township colleagues asked me to curl with them recently in a municipal bonspiel at Grand Valley, not realizing they were scrapping the bottom of that proverbial barrel.

Although I reluctantly admit to being a curler, my prowess on the curling sheets leaves a lot to be desired. It has been known to raise more than a few eyebrows on "skips" who were forced to acknowledge my presence on their team by allowing me to throw rocks, preferably as a lead or second, where I could do the least damage.

Some of them have to admit, however, that as a sweeper I take a back seat to no one, although it has also been noted by more than one perceptive skip that I sometimes get over-enthused.

In my enthusiasm for the game I develop a blindness to color which makes all handles on the stones look like the same shade. This might be fine down in Dixie or other places where they could use a little color blindness, but in the game of baseball it would be tantamount to throwing your own player out at first base when you sweep the other team's rocks into the house.

So you can imagine what even the most well-intentioned, charitable skip thinks when he sees his lead or second tearing down the ice after the opposition's rocks, sweeping ahead of them with energy I can scarcely summon when our own rocks are on their way.

It kind of makes them grind their teeth and yell some epithet such as:

"Hey there, do you think you are on a Dutch Cleanser label?"

Some skips also take offense when a fellow, in the heat of an exciting game, picks

up the wrong color and takes dead aim at the other rocks, and then throws his best stone of the night. It kind of shakes them, as I observed the other night when this happened to me. It took the vice-skip and another fellow on the team to restrain our skipper with a headlock and a Chinese burn.

So it was kind of refreshing really to journey to Grand Valley the other day and discover some of the fellows from Mulmur township who registered in the bonspiel had never curled anything but a pig's tail before.

Warren Parkinson, being pretty broad-minded as well as reeve, and with only one game of curling under his own belt before, nominated me for vice-skip, picking Teddy Fox, a township neighbor and Guelph Curling Club member to skip the team, which also included Councillor Kenny Fair, a one-time curler as second, and himself as lead.

In the first game we played so well that (Continued on Page Five)

## Ontario's "beer budget" . . . .

Ontario's 1972 budget, released by Provincial Treasurer Darcy McKeough last week, will probably go down in the books as the "beer budget".

Mr. McKeough announced increases in the prices of beer, spirits and wine on April 17 but he neglected to say that only part of the increase would go to taxes. The remainder goes to the producers.

Of course, the first reaction from the press was to pillory Mr. McKeough and his party for having the nerve to raise beer prices when they had already taken a modest leap last summer to coincide with prices in the North. Then it was discovered that only a portion would go to taxes and the rest would go to the brewers, distillers and wine makers.

The province will receive \$28 million from beer price increases, the brewers will receive \$11 million. Liquor

increases will net the province \$8 million while distillers will receive \$6 million. Increases in wine prices will benefit the province by \$2.3 million with the wine makers receiving \$1.5 million.

The Toronto Globe and Mail thundered: "What makes it plain that deception was intended is that from all the price increases the federal Government will also receive \$2.2 million in increased excise tax. Only to protect its trade friends would the Conservative Ontario Government have neglected to mention that \$2.2 million was really going into the Liberal federal pockets."

Mr. McKeough defended his policies by stating the producers are as entitled as anyone to ask for price increases. But he never fully explained why they were concealed in the form of a tax increase, for as the Globe points out brewers and distillers are reporting

glatifying earnings this year.

So the suspicion arises, naturally, that the Government is repaying corporate interests for campaign funds in the last provincial election, only a memory's breath away, especially since Mr. Davis and his Government have refused to make public the names of donors and the size of contributions.

But there is another unpalatable facet to the budget which points out that tax increases are meant to pay for reform legislation the Government promised in the Fall election, and is now introducing.

This also strikes us as being concealment, since taxpayers expected these could be purchased with revenue already on the tax rolls.

At the same time it is a lesson for all that handouts or concessions from any Government must be paid out of the public purse. When it is empty, the only logical place to go for more money is to the people.

## Mini-Comment . . .

According to the sleuths at the Globe and Mail, William Davis recently had the title of Prime Minister removed from his door at Queen's Park in favor of the simple word, Premier. We have always maintained that there could be only one prime minister in Canada and premier was a usable alternative for the "first" minister of each province. Now Premier Davis has confirmed that he thinks so, too.

As the snow disappears and winter sand replaces it as a road cover, it becomes apparent both the town works staff and individuals are going to be mighty busy cleaning up winter debris. Because there was an unusual amount of ice this year, the problem was compounded by unusually large amounts of sand that had to be used.

The managing director of the Hamilton Automobile Club takes sharp issue with the new Ontario budget, claiming it discriminates against motorists. "The continued practice of

the provincial government in treating motorists and the motor vehicle in the same luxury group as liquor and cigarettes is one which is long overdue for an overhaul . . . it appears that the additional revenues to be picked up from the motorist will be at least double those paid by liquor and cigarette purchasers. Somehow, there seems to be a distortion of values and priorities," Mr. Oakie says. "For many families the motor vehicle is an essential and primary means of transportation."

Although the prime minister is reported to have said that if 51 per cent of the people were against putting the new airport in Pickering township, the government would reconsider the site, a special supplement issued by provincial treasurer Darcy McKeough declares Pickering is the best possible location. The decision is based on three years of investigation and analysis, the supplement reports. Eighty-nine sites were originally considered; 59 of these were examined in critical detail.

Twelve of them were studied at even greater depth, and six of them were examined exhaustively. From these Pickering emerged as the best all-around choice.

The Bruce Trail News, reporting on a moonlight hike January 29 to Rattlesnake Point, has this to say: "We apologize to a couple who were in a car on the parking lot at Rattlesnake Point. They probably felt that they were miles from civilization and safe from any intrusion. But 70 hikers walking past the car at about 9.30 p.m., all armed with flashlights?"

Proof that professional hockey is a business rather than a sport nowadays is provided by the 75 per cent hike in ticket prices for playoff games in Toronto. The same fans that carried the freight all year will now be paying through the nose to see the teams perform.

### 20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, April 10, 1952.

A naphtha gasoline explosion Wednesday severely burned the face and shoulders of Mrs. Robt. Darby, covered people in the half-block area with soot and started a fire in the Darby kitchen that resulted in damage estimated at \$2,000. Mrs. Darby was cleaning curtains in her kitchen when a thunderous explosion attracted people from the business section and several blocks around. A washing machine, refrigerator and gas stove were almost completely destroyed.

About a dozen ladies enjoyed tea served by two dozen members of the Acton Brownies in the scout hall Saturday afternoon. Nine young ladies, all members of the Brownies, played the piano during the tea. They were Ella Jany, Jill Haydon, Mary Jane Force, Ruth Landsborough, Ruth Jones, Margaret Armstrong, Pat Coles, Rhona McEachern and Faye McEachern. In charge of the tea were Jean Harris, Audrey Wilkinson, May Dyrwi and Lorraine Mullin.

The Limehouse hall board sponsored a hard times euchre and dance Friday with costume prizes going to Miss Margaret Cain and Mr. Erwin Lewis. S. M. Wright won a doll in a raffle.

Mr. A. Haydon, manager of the Bank of Nova Scotia in Acton for the past four and a half years, has been promoted to the management of the branch at Pembroke and he and Mrs. Haydon, John and Jill will be leaving soon. Successor in the Acton branch will Mr. W. A. Woodburn, who has been assistant manager of the Queen and Church branch in Toronto.

Donald Cook has been transferred to Acton O.P.P. from Oakville. He replaces W. Trodd who has gone to Oakville.

### 50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, April 6, 1822.

The ice storm on Friday was responsible for the electric power being off from Friday

evening at 6.30 until Saturday afternoon at 4.30. This is the longest period current users have been inconvenienced since the Hydro-Electric power was installed here. All the factories in town were closed down on Saturday except Beardmore and Co.

Business at the sole leather tannery of Messrs. Beardmore and Co. is growing rapidly and has reached a record output. Preparations are now being made to increase the capacity to 1,000 finished sides per day. Workmen are now engaged in laying the foundation for a large new addition.

Quite a number of citizens have already commenced the removal of ashes from their cellars and backyards and as a result the teamsters are doing good business.

The Merchants Bank passed out on Saturday and the Bank of Montreal assumed control. The sign "Merchants Bank" which was at the corner of the Warren Block for over 20 years has been replaced.

Members of the Irish rebel army organized under de Valera, the rebel

leader, attacked the Freeman's Journal last week in Dublin and damage to the plant reached \$250,000. Harry Moore, the managing editor, was assaulted. He is the son of Rev. T. Albert Moore, Toronto.

The mayor of Guelph has forbidden an exhibition of hypnotism in that city. Workmen who are putting in their time at 30c an hour are wondering how they can have needed carpeting and painting done to their homes when these mechanics want 60c an hour for their work.

### 75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, April 15, 1897.

Those abominable cigarettes again! The second case in Newmarket recently, showing the baneful effects of cigarettes occurred at the Salvation Army barracks last Sunday evening when a young man named Wythe caused considerable disturbance and anxiety by going into fits. Medical attention was secured and some nicotine was taken from his stomach. The young man had been smoking cigarettes pretty freely and made up his mind to stop it entirely and it is said the fits were due to breaking off the habit so suddenly.

Some stable yards in town have more the statutory amount of manure accumulated. Messrs. Henderson and Co. took in between 200 and 300 dozen of eggs over the counter in regular trade Saturday.

"Jumbo" and "Sailor", two well-known canines about town, got into a scrap on Sunday in front of J. C. Hill's bicycle window. The half-dozen loungers who were there at the time did not discourage the dogs until they had smashed the window. Mr. Hill is wondering who'll pay the damage.

Mr. J. Walker of Crewsons Corner was the first to commence ploughing in this vicinity. The new Baptist church which has been talked about for some time is likely to be an accomplished fact before many months have passed. There are already in hand subscriptions and donations which amount to a very respectable four figure sum.

So many Rockwood citizens are leaving for the west the village seems rather deserted, but the friends of the departed ones are recovering from their sorrow. Showers, sunbeams, early bird songs, fresh violets, rainbows, spring bonnets, Easter anthems are among the incidental diversions of the hour.

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