

Will Acton and townships pay regional piper?

With the imposition of regional government only a few months away, residents of Acton, Esqueping and Nassagaweya should be concerned about disquieting reports of crucial problems facing the town of Georgetown. The four municipalities will comprise the northern borough in a four borough Halton region.

The reason for concern is that residents of Acton and the two townships may be asked to "share" in developments which will benefit only residents of Georgetown and the immediate area, at the expense of programs in the other municipalities.

The immediate concern is in the field of recreation but it also extends to such costly items as sewage disposal, fire fighting, police and lack of facilities in our neighboring town, pointed out by former Georgetown councillor Joan Smith in an article in the Oakville Daily Journal Record.

Georgetown has proposed a major recreation complex to include a new arena and an indoor swimming pool. Estimates for the complex range as high as a million dollars.

This is all well and good for residents of Georgetown but since recreation is to be paid for and administered at the local level in a two tier regional government system, we fear all four northern municipalities could get stuck with the bill — or part of it.

Now we have read information that seems to pooh-pooh this concept but have seen no safeguards to ensure it will not happen. Since we are to be one community with one council where would they draw the line?

This fear also extends to other areas Mrs. Smith mentions in the Oakville paper, insisting every facility in Georgetown is overloaded.

She says the sewage treatment plant is polluting the Credit River and the Department of the Environment insists Georgetown must add a million dollar extension. When the town was a mere 3,500 people it had a volunteer fire department of 30—a figure which hasn't changed, although the population has almost reached 18,000. The new paid fire chief is recommending a capital expenditure of \$450,000 to bring the department up to standard.

Mrs. Smith declares the list of needs is endless. Police are in cramped quarters, there's no facility for live theatre, meeting rooms are scarce and many people without storm sewers, sidewalks or boulevards want to get their fingers into the tax pot.

She blames part of the problem on Georgetown's rapid growth and the direction councils of the past took to keep taxes down. Lot levy charges and subdivision agreements did not make any substantial improvement until last year, she claims, because much of the rapid development took place without them.

The town has never introduced any form of local improvement taxation which means everyone pays for them, and for new residents who pay through subdivision agreements it can mean paying for their own and helping pay for others.

Although some of these problems are familiar to Acton as well, Mrs. Smith's report should cause us to shudder since we are soon to be joined in marriage with our neighbor. Who will pay the toll to ensure Georgetown gets the needed improvements?

While all the financial arrangements have not been resolved, our uncertainties and alarm increase as the time for regional government approaches. They are not soothed by reports such as the one Georgetown councillor Phil Siddall prepared which suggests the slow growth of North Halton is going to hamper its tax base and widen still further the gap which exists between the north and the south of Halton, which the province proposes to plug with grants.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the loss of Milton to the north has far greater implications than most of us realize. Milton would have provided the foil to balance the north so Georgetown and area does not completely dominate.

The province has decided otherwise and this means the two townships and Acton must be on their guard to ensure we go into this, regional set-up fully aware of all its costs and hazards, determined to be a full partner in a borough council.

Spirit of legislation must guide municipal planners

There seems to be unanimous accord at all levels of government that the family farm must be preserved.

The federal government has promised to amend the tax laws so the capital gains tax is postponed on farms transferred within the family during the farmer's lifetime.

Ontario has introduced a three part program to reduce taxes on farm land to help keep the family farm possible. Grants to relieve property taxes will be increased to 50 per cent, which is almost complete exemption. Succession duties on farm assets will be forgiven over a 25-year period, provided the farm continues to operate as a family farm and finally a farmer will be allowed to make a taxfree gift up to \$50,000 to his children.

County and township councils have always been sympathetic to the farmer and the needs of the land, recognizing they are a special case. The independence of Canadian farmers must be preserved.

There are, however, other pressures on the land, with which farmers must contend, that make operation of a family farm more difficult as the years go by. For instance, the increasing power of government and planning boards over land use.

Ordinarily the problems would not infringe on the rights of farmers too deeply but there could be occasions where unused land cannot be directed towards another use because of unyielding, impractical application of zoning.

Although the farmer owns the land and could use the extra money from the sale of a few acres, he is not free to act without the sanction of land use authorities at Queens Park. It could be land which has no agriculture use but is tied with the farm and as such is bound by the same rules as fertile feeds, pasture and woodlots.

We note that the Wingham Advance-Times has similar thoughts about the restrictive nature of the legislation. The paper points out the city man who craves a spot in the open countryside, and is not short of funds, can buy one or two hundred acres and neglect the big portion of his holdings while he luxuriates on the few acres he really only wanted in the first place. Such disinterested owners of agricultural properties have driven

many legitimate farmers out of some rural areas.

It is difficult to frame laws that preserve land for agriculture. There are loopholes open to those who have the funds and the expertise to circumvent them.

So much of the responsibility for a common sense approach to the use of land lies with planning boards and committees of adjustment who wield the power that can make the difference between conscientious application of the laws and senseless power for power's sake.

Each municipality must ensure their boards are composed of the best men available for the job, with a full understanding of the spirit of the legislation, rather than just knowing it by rote and applying it insensitively.



EVEN THE CATS want more power these days as this black feline belonging to Free Press columnist Wendy Thomson says mutely without benefit of clenched paw or raised leg. This particular cat also seems to be bilingual, at least when her mistress caught her in this pose, almost boxed in.

Free Press Editorial Page



Bill Smiley

Smiley is getting somewhere, in his own laborious way. And the most discerning readers are chuckling, "I'll bet he just made out his income tax."

The latter are right, of course. And as I sat there, surrounded by papers, sick at heart when I realized what a puny amount a year of hard labor had produced. I had only one thought: "When is the great Canadian Revolution going to start?"

Then came other thoughts. What symbol shall we attack? Do they need anyone to lead the attacks on the barricades? Which of the dastards will I personally gun down?

People will put up with almost anything, as long as they are left in peace. They'll take an incredible amount of being pushed around without doing more than grumble. But there comes a point when all the frustrations, the cheating, the bullying, merge under some catalyst and the great public heart boils over with rage and humiliation.

When it does, heads roll. This is just a little advance notice to some of our various governments, so that any of their mandarins who want to take to the hills on the day of reckoning can get their bags packed and pick out the particular hills they want to take to.

In the French Revolution, the Bastille was the symbol of authority and repression. The people stormed it and took it. The American Revolution, or The War of Independence, as our friends to the south prefer, also began with a symbol — chests of tea. Large numbers of these were dumped into Boston harbour in a protest that has resulted in the peculiar way in which the people of Boston have spoken ever since.

In both cases, the revolutions were produced by the same basic factor — excessive taxation. In the case of the French, the taxation produced extreme poverty and hunger. With the Yanks, it produced violent anger.

In the one case, the result was the loss of a head for a great many people who had the same quantity of brains before the operation as they had after it. In the other, the result was the loss of a half-continent of incredible riches.

Both events in history brought their advantages, of course. Without the French effort, which spawned Napoleon, we wouldn't have had the Napoleonic Wars and the Retreat from Moscow, and where would our history teachers be?

Without the American Revolution, western culture would have been infinitely poorer. What other nation would have had the initiative and gumption to develop such monumental human achievements as Hollywood and the hamburger?

You may think this excursion into history has no point. But the more discerning readers of this column know that

I have news for those in power. I'm not kidding. If you don't get it with bullets, you'll get it with ballots. You can rub our faces in it only so long, and then the hand that robs the cradle, along with everything else that can be robbed, is going to be bitten. To the bone.

Our national Liberal party, supreme in its power, arrogance and scorn, should have learned a lesson. It is still bleeding.

In province after province, the people have had their say and have tossed out the old guard. Ontario is one of the few that have survived.

Here is a prediction. Check it later. I've never been wrong. Premier William Davis, the most unimpressive politician I've ever heard, and that ranks from deputy-reeves up, is in for a big fat fall, along with his party.

Why? It's obvious, from the recent Ontario budget. The party has lost touch with reality. And that's death in politics.

As an example? The energy tax the government proposed, now dispatched to Limbo.

Tax the luxuries. Whack it on cigarettes and liquor and fur coats and there'll be some grumbling. But stick a tax on light and heat necessities in this climate, and you are accepting the political kiss of death. We shall not forget, at election time.

It's the most stupid single tax that I have ever encountered, and that is a big statement. It hits the little guy, the elderly, those on welfare, and everybody else who is scrimping to make ends meet.

EPILOGUE: My wife asked me, as I paced a hole in the rug grinding my teeth: "What do we get for all this income tax we pay?"

It was a typical woman's question, right on the nose. For the life of me, I couldn't give her an answer that made sense. "Well, there's the Armed Forces." Protecting us against Iceland. "Uh, there are the salaries and offices and staff of parliament." Producing more taxes. "And, uh, you know, welfare and uh, icebreakers and uh, royal commissions and uh, well, stuff like that."

Aux barricades, mes camarades!

Back Issues of The Free Press

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, May 7, 1953.

The grandstand in Prospect Park will be boarded up according to the park committee of Acton council when they decided not to repair the structure. A rough estimate of \$800 had been received for repairs. Councillor J. Greer declared, "I wouldn't spend a nickel on it."

The school board hired Miss Dorothy Warne and Miss Vivian McDougall for the ensuing year and Mrs. Heard as music supervisor. It is expected there will be 85 to 90 pupils in the kindergarten.

A slide has been purchased by Acton's Men to be placed in the park near the swing.

Joyce Farmer is visiting Ottawa this week as a guest of Acton and Ottawa Rotary club.

More than 400 Halton students participated in the Music Festival in Knox church, Milton. Georgetown carried off the most awards with Oakville second and Milton third. Receiving top honors from Acton were Donna McMillan, Blair Hotchen, Pat Coles, Ruth Landsborough and Peter Lawson.

Paintings by members of the art class in the Y instructed by Dorothy Stone are on display in the window of Talbot's hardware.

Grounds of the Beardmore recreation club have been cleaned up. Tennis and lawn bowling enthusiasts are getting ready for the season.

New stamps with the picture of Queen Elizabeth II went on sale this week.

Y nursery school had a closing party. Mothers made a presentation to Mrs. D. Price and other leaders.

Acton tag day for the C.N.I.B. raised \$47.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, May 3, 1923.

A meeting of those interested in girls' baseball was held on Monday evening and a girls' team was formed with the following officers: president Mrs. Adah Ostrander; captain Miss L.V. Mason, manager H.M. Kennedy, secretary-treasurer Mrs. D. H. Lindsay; committee Misses Olla Armstrong, Eva Johnston, Messrs. R. Scott, H. M. Kennedy and Harry Harrison.

On Saturday evening a number of young people from Rockwood were invited to the sugar camp at the home of Leslie and Pearson, Erin, where they were treated to a real old-fashioned taffy party. They were welcomed by C. J.W. Leslie, who although in his 75th year, had been boiling all day and had taken off nine gallons of real syrup by six o'clock. Mr. Leslie's bush is perhaps one of the largest sugar bushes in the country there being over 1,000 trees available for tapping.

Mr. John Kennedy and Miss Velma Wilson of Nassagaweya were joined in wedlock about the middle of the month.

Women in the U.S. are boycotting sugar. The best way to judge your neighbor's thrift is to look in his backyard, and the best way to retain your neighbor's good will is to keep your hens in your own back yard.

Citizens should commence to lay in stocks of flags for Acton's jubilee celebration.

John H. Ross of Sault Ste. Marie has been appointed principal of Guelph's new \$400,000 Collegiate vocation institute.

At the weekly practice of Acton Citizens' Band Mr. R.J. Kerr treated the boys to ice cream.

Several of Acton's leading citizens have received invitations to luncheon with the Lieutenant-Governor at Government House, Toronto, Tuesday at noon.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, May 5, 1888.

The close season for trout ended on Monday and before sunrise there was a fair quota of enthusiastic fishermen on the move. The measure of success has been small indeed thus far except at the new stock pond of Firstbrook Bros. The trout there are now of good size and in prime condition. Mr. Firstbrook caught a large number and took them to the city Monday. The pond is now open to fishermen upon payment of a specified entrance fee and a rate per pound for fish caught.

In response to numerous complaints on the part of farmers and others whose property the stream passing through the tanneries runs through, the members of the Township Board of Health made tour of inspection. Saturday, they traced the stream up for several miles and then made a critical examination of the tanneries and of the refuse floating from them into the creek. Owing to improvements now in progress to the filters and settling basins there has been somewhat more of the offensive matter passing into the creek for a week or so but Messrs. Beardmore and Co. hope by the improvements in the course on construction to remedy the defects complained of.

Mrs. Duncan Kingsbury and daughter left Nassagaweya for the North-West. Her husband is teaching school there.

Miss Ettie Laird, the winsome deputy at the post office has been appointed librarian. (Mrs. R.M. MacDonald, who died this year.) One hundred copies of the catalogue will be printed. The room in the town hall is still being prepared for the opening of the library.

Acton population increased during the year by 114. There are 317 children between the ages of 5 and 16, and 71 dogs. Assessment is \$281,415, an increase of \$2,185 over last year.

Lions ire misplaced



In a letter to Parks Board last week, Acton Lions took a bite out of the Free Press for publishing a simulated photo of their proposal to move the old CN railway station to a point at the bottom end of Tyler Ave.

Some members of the club felt the simulated picture which was designed to give readers an idea of what the Lions intended to do with the station was misleading because the site was not exact. They also said the picture appeared to have been taken before the lake was dredged and was to a different scale.

"What is actually superimposed is a building which would probably be close to 300 feet long," the letter charged.

We do not want to get into a controversy with the Lions over this picture, which, of course could not perfectly match the point where the Lions intended to put the station,

since only they knew where it was to be. However, if the station had actually been on the property it would have looked much larger than it appears in the simulated photo we published.

Since the Lions have aired their opinions publicly we think it only fair readers should judge for themselves whether we erred or tried to misrepresent the proposal. So here is the picture again, on a slightly smaller scale which, of course, does nothing to alter the proportions.

We would also suggest that the picture had nothing to do with opposition to the proposal since it did not appear until residents had already banded together to oppose the scheme.

It seems the club is beating the wrong dog.

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