

Spread the wealth around

Those of us who live within the periphery of large cities with its attendant inflated living prices would not view the \$156 announced recently as the average weekly wage for Ontario workers as being over-abundant. However, there are those parts of Ontario which lie well beyond influence of the cities where the \$156 average wage would seem to be far above what the average worker makes.

Take Listowel, for instance. The Listowel Banner says "We believe that with the exception of teachers, registered nurses, our top municipal employees and our policemen, we'd be safe in saying very few people in Listowel are up to that average." And the Banner asserts there is strong resentment over that fact.

Workers in the cities and larger centres around them usually work for companies where profit margins are substantially above industries in the small towns and this accounts for the difference but (Let's not forget it is more costly to live in the cities than in a small town.)

Nevertheless the Banner is right, there is resentment regard-

ing the salaries of many public employees in the small towns of Ontario. Wages of postal worker, for instance, are away ahead of what most people in a small town can hope to earn. Employees of small businesses and factories are apparently expected to accept a lower wage scale as part of their sacrifice for the advantage of living in a small town or rural area while public employees are not.

Naturally, the worker who is earning less resents having to fork over money in taxes to help pay people with similar educational background—and doing the same work. The inequality is there but it is a problem that won't be solved by paying public employees less.

Many public employees in the cities are just getting by on their wages, unable to keep up with the escalating cost of living. They are caught up in the price squeeze just as much as small town businesses and employers. Making their wages less would only be making more people discontented.

The answer obviously then is in increasing the take home pay of those who live in smaller places and rural areas.

How could it be done? That's a problem for the politicians and the economists (and one to which they are welcome) but we suggest it means devising ways of spreading industrial growth around Ontario making it profitable and desirable.

It means improving public transportation in the small towns—better railway and bus service. It means bending an ear towards the problems of those in the small towns, spreading the population out so it is not concentrated in the Toronto-Hamilton area of the province.

It means spreading the wealth of the province around so it is not controlled by Bay St., James St. or any other centralized heavily urbanized bureau.

It means making small town living so attractive the city dweller will no longer wish to remain in the smog, noise and less appealing aspects of the city.

The unfortunate part of all these changes would be the growth of the small towns into small cities—but that's a price which would have to be paid.



DURING A TOUR of Sainte-Marie among the Hurons near Midland, teacher Miss Patricia Nelson, on the far right, of Acton instructs her deaf students on the Huron Indian culture. Miss Nelson is using a sign language alphabet as well as speaking so her students can lip read. From the right is Maria Melo, 15 of Hamilton, Heather Gibson, 14, R.R. 4, Creemore and Gail McCarthy, 16, of Agincourt. The girls are students at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Milton and were among several students from the school who "lived-in" at the reconstructed mission. They slept in fireplace heated dwellings and prepared their meals 17th-century style—over an open fire and in a hot-coal oven. Sainte-Marie was built by French Jesuit priests in the middle 1600's as a mission headquarters among the Hurons. The Ontario government undertook reconstruction in 1965 and the historic site opened in 1967. (Photo by McConnell, Midland.)

Bill SMILEY



Cross my heart, I won't write another column about my trip to Germany. After this one.

But I may never be treated as a distinguished visitor again, so you'll just have to bear with me.

Highlight of the trip (for my kid brother), was Lunch With The General. He organized it, and as the time approached, there was so much excitement about it that I began to get the feeling I was going to have lunch with God.

Unacquainted as I am with the military hierarchy, and unimpressed as I am with rank, I expect I didn't show the proper awe, but it was impressed on me from all sides that it was a signal honor.

I don't know what kind of a line my brother shot about me, but it must have been good one. It seems that The General just doesn't normally invite small-town columnists to lunch or anything else.

It wasn't much of a lunch, as The General is a spartan type, one of those infuriating people who get up and jog in the morning, are on the job at 8 a.m., work like fury and have no bad habits.

There was a gaggle of American one and two-star generals present, and two other Canadians, Colonel Smiley and Brig. Gen. "Joey" Romanow, a westerner.

The General, David C. Jones, has four stars, about as many as they hand out, and is Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Air Force

Europe, and Commander, 4th Allied Tactical Air Force. A real wheel.

He greeted me pleasantly, sat me on his right, and after some desultory luncheon talk, gave me a lucid exposition of the military picture, and kept waiting for me to ask intelligent, penetrating questions. I didn't have any.

He threw my brother a compliment, telling me the kid was his right-hand man when it came to liaison with the French. My brother beamed. I threw a little cold water on him by reminding him that he wasn't always so smart. I used to borrow half his paper route money from him every Saturday night, and still owe him \$7.45. He countered with a reminder that he was keeping track, and at compound interest, it was now in the neighborhood of \$40,000. Oh, the gay banter when we big wheels get together for lunch!

Anyway, the general made me feel safer about the Warsaw Pact people on the other side of the Iron Curtain. They have more of everything, should hostilities break out, but "we" have better hardware for both defence and attack.

More fun than the lunch with the general was a visit I paid to the Canadian school at Ramstein. Only 70 kids and seven teachers, an ideal educational situation. The kids have it lucky and know it. So do the teachers.

Here I was at home. Teased the kids about not having long hair, scared them about the big sausage-factory schools they

were going back to, signed autographs on copies of my column they had, and went for a ride in a simulated space-ship with four little guys. A bright, lively group of youngsters, who are seeing a lot of Europe, but who all signified they'd be glad to get home to Canada.

Teachers young and friendly, wishing they could stay on an extra year, Principal Warren Haacke of Regina said it's a great experience. Bright young English teacher Bryce Tanner, a Kincardine boy, reads my column in the hometown paper, and reproduces some of them for the students.

One more party to go to, an all-Canadian bash. It was formal dress for officers. I had none, and wanted to tag along in my blazer and flannels but the kid brother is a man for protocol, and would have none of it. He dug through his duds and the result was something to see. Can you picture your faithful correspondent in a pink evening shirt, with ruffles down the front, a huge black velvet bow tie, a black evening jacket big enough for two of him, black evening trousers cutting him in two (my brother is shorter) held up by a pair of red skiing braces? My wife was horrified when I told her, but I looked rather dashing.

Off in the morning, groggy with fatigue, for the mad dash home. Ramstein to Lahr by autobahn. Lahr to Gatwick by plane. Gatwick to Ottawa, Ottawa to Trenton. First casualty of trip. They'd taken off my bag at Ottawa. Slept at officers mess, borrowed razor in morning, had breakfast with R.C. Padre, most sensible chap I'd met in five days. Bag had arrived. Bumbled ride to city with Bill Padden, Major, and his dog.

Everything was running down, including yours truly. From Lunch With The General, to sharing an old station wagon with a dachshund. Long, dreary bus ride. Connecting bus late. Snowing.

Finally home, feeling like a skeleton. And I knew the V.I.P. was back to his usual Very Unimportant Person status, when my wife, after bussing me heartily, proclaimed, "Bill, I've had a terrible time with those cats."

"Cut", as we say in the movies.

Free Press Editorial Page

B2 The Acton Free Press, Wed., May 15, 1974

The British are coming

Great Britain once again took over the lead in providing immigrants to Canada, ousting the United States which led the migration in the previous two years.

Percentages show Britain provided 14.4 per cent of the 184,200 newcomers while the U.S. was second with 13.9 per cent or 25,242 people. Hong Kong, Portugal, Jamaica and India are the four next countries in line.

Canada was a more attractive place in 1973 than in '72 because immigration was up 51 per cent over the previous year. Ontario got the major part of the immigrants—

56 per cent—while the warm, balmy climate of British Columbia attracted 15.2 per cent, followed closely by Quebec's 14.6 per cent.

Almost 80 per cent of the immigrants (79.2 per cent) were under 35 years of age, showing the attractions of this vast country appeal to the young and strong, those who want to carve a life for themselves in a comparatively new style.

Perhaps the most surprising figures during the last few years have been the number of immigrants from the United States, where the tide used to flow from Canada. Roles are reversed now

with citizens of the U.S. trekking north. This is due in part to the number of Americans taking jobs with their own firms in Canada but is also a symptom of the magnetic attraction Canada has for Americans.

There are those who oppose immigration to Canada, supposing that immigrants take jobs from Canadians but experience in the past has shown they create jobs as well as enriching the country spiritually and culturally.

The Canadian mosaic may seem like an exaggerated concept but it becomes more real as immigration from the world's multitudes continues to flow here.

Centennial shapes up

Good news to a has-been town is the decision of the Rotarians and firefighters to proceed with plans for a giant July 1 celebration of Acton's centennial. Rotary will have a chicken barbecue and firefighters plan their biggest fireworks display ever.

And more is promised, including a special week by the merchants of the retail section of the Chamber of Commerce.

Many people have had the feeling nothing would be done to mark centennial, since Acton was no longer a town. Previous plans had fallen through, and we all ended up with that "lost" feeling of having no council to back groups up.

Plenty more can be done. Other groups—like the Legion and Duke of Devonshire chapter of the I.O.D.E.—are quietly proceeding with their own special things. But if more groups would opt in to the Rotary-firefighter plan, Acton's big day can be even bigger.

It doesn't really take long to arrange our big birthday bash.

Free Press back issues

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, May 13, 1954.

Acton Rotary's third annual Peanut Day marked its best success to date Saturday when net revenue of about \$575 was tabulated. Saturday's parade was a colorful event led by six local ladies stepping high and one young man. Immediately behind came the band followed by the popular Planters float with its oversize human peanuts. Two nine-year-olds, Carmen Woodburn and Jack Hinton, were the best guessers on how many peanuts studded the float. Both boys submitted 200,000. Arrangements for this year's Peanut Day were made by Vic Masters and Jim Ledger.

Decorations Day, which its planning committee hopes will become an annual event for the community, will be held Sunday, June 20. A parade and brief service are planned. Decision to hold Decorations Day for the town stemmed from the Lake-side chapter I.O.D.E.'s annual practice of decorating graves of servicemen and chapter members on Remembrance Day. The Legion agreed to co-operate. Vic Patrick was named chairman of the committee and Mrs. A. Orr secretary. Marshal for the parade will be Dr. A. J. Buchanan.

Doug Manning, owner of Manning Electric, is erecting a two-storey brick building at the corner of Mill and John Sts. Over 100 tots and their mothers attended the cradle roll tea at Knox Presbyterian church Wednesday afternoon.

Janice Baker was chosen to represent Acton high school in a Rotary sponsored trip to Ottawa.

Well baby clinics are conducted by Dr. Bull, nurses and staff of the county health unit every third Friday in St. Alban's hall.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, May 15, 1924.

A new cement platform is under construction at the Canadian National Railway station here. Several cars of cement and gravel have arrived. The old platform was a well-built one of three-inch pine plank and has done duty, with sundry repairs, since the erection of the present station. It had gotten considerably out of repair.

Among the nurses who graduated at Guelph General Hospital on Monday were Misses Mary Mabel Boyd, Acton and Nellie Jane Cook, Ospringe.

The first ball game of the season is scheduled for this evening when the Acton senior team and a team from Hillsburg are to play in the park.

The officers of the Upper Canada Bible Society are arranging for a field day in the

churches in town on Sunday, May 25. Four of the churches have opened their pulpits to speakers.

Twenty-six new members were received into the Methodist church in the Rockwood and Eramosa circuit. Infant baptism was also administered at the evening service in Rockwood.

It is a fine thing for any community when Mother's Day is loyally observed. The churches and Sunday schools in town made much of the occasion.

Even last Thursday evening when the rain was falling in torrents a good-sized audience assembled in the town hall for the concert by Acton Citizens' Band. The general opinion is that the band has never reached a higher state of efficiency.

To a Nassagaweya man goes the expensive distinction of being the first man to lose his auto under the new confiscation ruling. He was charged with selling home brew on the Toronto-Hamilton highway. His Ford touring was confiscated and he was fined \$500.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, May 4, 1899.

One of the sprightliest elderly ladies of this section is Mrs. Sproul, mother of Alex. Sproul of lot 18, con. 3 Esquimaux and a highly esteemed lady. She is in her 76th year and as independent as a matron of thirty. On Tuesday, having a few purchases to make and there being no conveyance coming to Acton, she walked up the four miles and was as lively during her stay in town as a school girl.

It was a happy thought of Capt. Langton when he conceived the idea of a dinner for the officers and men of Company 6 of the Lorne Scots and a means of spending an enjoyable evening and of popularizing militia matters in town. On Friday the dining room of the Dominion Hotel was well filled with guests. The menu was one of the finest ever given in town.

The town assessor returned the roll for 1899, and showed that the total assessment was \$285,105; as follows, real estate \$264,290; personal property \$20,815; income \$800; population 1414; children between ages of 6 and 16, 313; between 7 and 13 years 22; between 16 and 21 104; dogs 67, bitches 2.

The merchants of Acton covenant with one another to close their respective places at 6 p.m. on the evenings of Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from May 1 to September 15. Had their agreement included the closing of stores at 9 or 9.30 p.m. on Saturday evenings it would have been a wise action. No considerable person would compel merchants to keep open until midnight every Saturday of the year.



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