

Free Press Editorial Page

Year of recognition

It has been a tough year for the Acton Volunteer Fire department and chief Mick Holmes, it has also been a year of recognition for them.

With three major fires in less than three weeks of each other, some residents of Acton were forced to realize the responsibility laid on the shoulders of the men who race to fires without concern for their own well-being.

Most of the firefighters have been in the department for several years. No matter what time of day it is, no matter what they are doing, their lives are governed by the wailing siren, calling them to the firehall. Without hesitation, these men jump in their cars and race off, never knowing the dangers, if any, which lie ahead. Some residents are annoyed at this siren disturbing the peace at meal time, or waking them in the middle of the night. However they keep on eating, or roll over and go back to sleep while the firefighters head out.

However, with the three destructive fires so close to each other, these people in town were shown

that these men are firefighters in every sense of the word. Unfortunately it was three homeless families that underline the fact that these men fight more than grass and chimney fires.

With the Chamber of Commerce decision last week to make the firefighters and Mick Holmes citizens of the Year, came the recognition the men have deserved for years. The fact that a record number of nominations for this group came into the Chamber shows the men are appreciated by everyone, not just those who have needed them to put out a fire.

The men are being honored at a special banquet on April 15. There are hundreds of people who would like to attend to offer congratulations and heartfelt thanks for the round the clock protection. Unfortunately, but unavoidably, there are a limited number of tickets. Those who will not be able to attend should take a few minutes of their day to congratulate the firefighters personally. After all, they take more than a few minutes to protect you and your family.

Biking weather soon

With the advent of spring and warmer weather, old and young enthusiasts will be thinking of getting out on the bicycle. The Ontario Safety League suggests a few preliminary steps you should take to insure your bike is safe.

Ride a bicycle that fits you. The size of your bike affects your ability to reach and use the steering, pedals and braking controls. You should be able to reach the ground comfortably with the ball of your foot while sitting upright on the seat.

Check the tires for wear and tear. Also check the wheel spokes, chain, and your lighting and horn systems. Make sure the bike is well oiled, and get down to the nuts and bolts of things, tightening any loose nuts where necessary.

Before taking the bike onto the street, check the braking ability of your machine on both wet and dry surfaces. Your bicycle should also

be in good alignment. If the bike veers to one side when pushed forward, it is out of line and needs adjustment.

Remember that the bicyclist is considered under the law to be a driver and as such traffic rules, regulations, signs and signals apply just the same to the cyclist as to the motorist. For those who wish to brush up on the law, there is an excellent pamphlet published by the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, "Ontario Laws and Your Bicycle". It is available at all Driver Examination Centres and through most police departments.

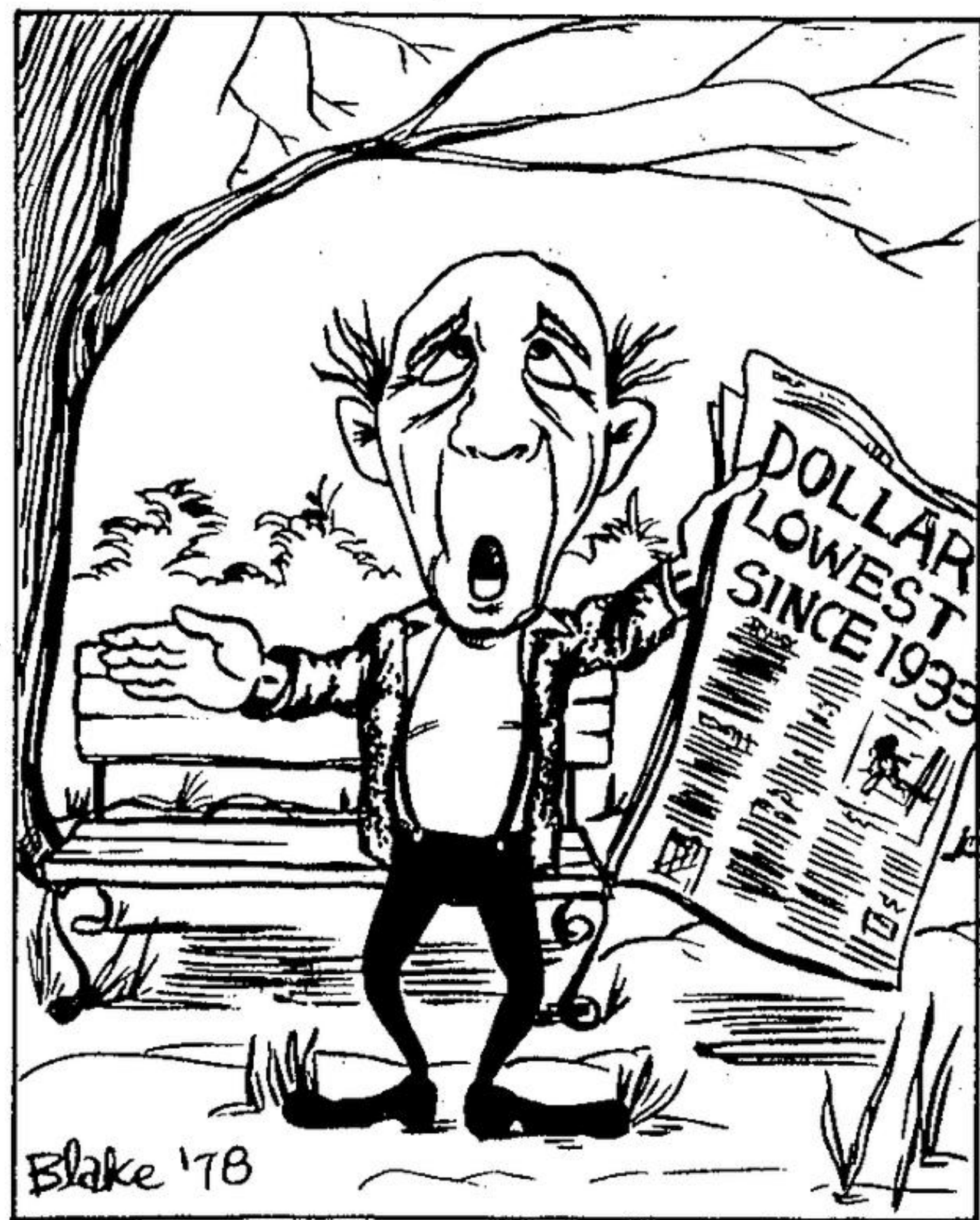
The Ontario Safety League reminds you that you're one of the smallest units on the road and it's not always easy for motorists to see you. Use reflective tape as required by law, reflectors and wear light coloured clothing at night.

Of this and that

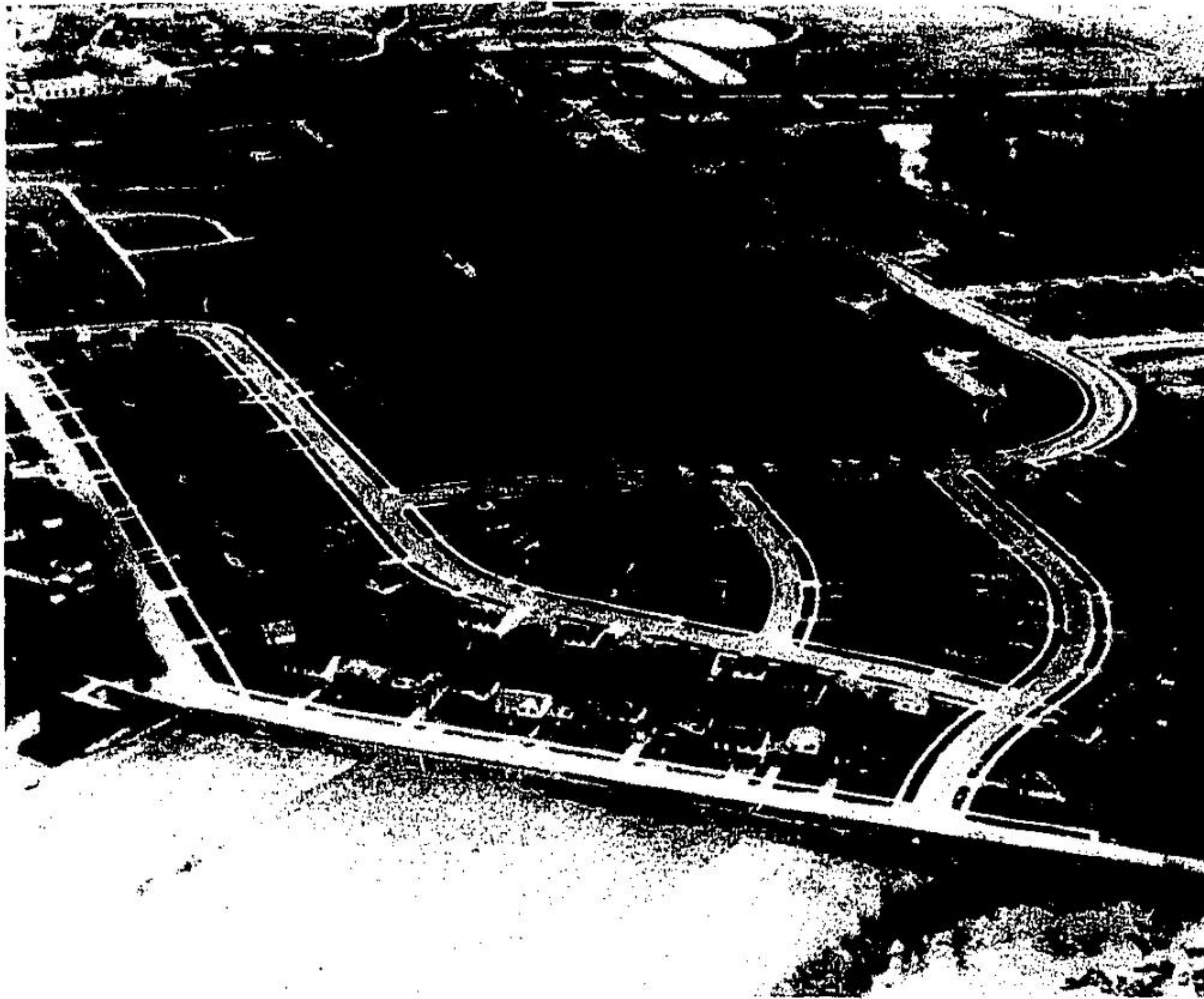
We got a letter this week addressed so: "Mr. G. Dills, President, Dills Printing and Plumbing Co. Ltd." No comments, please. We just filed in under "Amusing" with envelopes addressed to the Acton Free Press, the Active Free Press, Mr. Kay Coles and Mr. Ed Kaydills.

"You say you want a job in this office. What can you do?" "Nothing." "You should have applied sooner. All those high salaried positions were taken long ago."

Time flies, but not love. Valentines took a full week to reach Toronto.



"Buddy, can you spare a dime?"



A robin's eye view



Sugar and spice by Bill Smiley

There are times when I am convinced that I was born 30 years too soon. One of them occurs when I see the wonderful opportunities for travel that young people have today. They make me pea-green with envy.

When you and I were young, Maggie, most of us didn't get much farther than the next town. A minority visited the city occasionally, and it was considered a big deal. And a whole lot of people never did get to see a big city in their entire lives. And were no worse off for it, of course.

Man, how that has changed. Nowadays, young people go galloping off to the four corners of the earth with no more thought about it than we'd have given to a weekend in the city. They're so blasé about it that it's sickening to an old guy like me, who has always yearned to travel, and never had the time or money or freedom to do it.

In my day, during the Depression, the only people who could afford to travel were the hobos. They could afford it because they didn't have any money. They rode free on the tops and inside the box-cars of freight trains. And they didn't have any responsibilities except the next meal and a place to sleep.

Looking back, I was one of the lucky ones. Most of my generation of youth was forced by circumstances to stay home, get any job available, and hang on to it like grim death, never venturing forth on the highroads of life. I was the envy of my class-mates, when, at 17, I nabbed a job on

the upper lake boats, and could come home bragging of having been to such bizarre, exotic places as Duluth, Sault Ste. Marie, Detroit, the Lakehead.

Today's youngsters would sneer at such bourgeois travels. They exchange anecdotes about Morocco and Moscow, Athens and Australia, Paris and Port-au-Prince, Delhi and Dubrovnik, Fair nauticae me, it does.

By the time he was 22, my own son had lived on both coasts of Canada, been to Mexico, New Orleans, Texas, Israel, Ireland, and a hundred other places that are just names in an atlas to me. Right now he's in Paraguay, South America, and has visited Argentina and Bolivia. He speaks four languages. I speak one, not too well.

My nephews have seen more countries than Chris Columbus or Sir Francis Drake. One's an airline pilot, and knows Europe, North America and the West Indies the way I know my way to school.

Another has worked in the Canadian north, Quebec, the Congo, Jamaica, and is now living in Costa Rica.

My nieces are just as peripatetic. They've been, among them to the West Coast, France, England, Russia. A four-day trip to New York, for them is scarcely worth mentioning. Migawd, I'd have given my left eyeball to see New York when I was their age! I thought it was pretty earth-shaking the first time I saw Toronto. Toronto, ye-e-c-ch!

Thousands of university students annually take a year off, borrow some money, stuff a packsack and head out for a year of bumming around Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa, India, Rotten kids!

In the last decade, the travel bug has spilled over into the high schools. Some of them are beginning to sound like agencies, with frequent announcements over the P.A. system:

"Will the group going to Rome in the winter break please assemble in Room 202 at 3.30 for a lesson in tying your toga."

"All those taking the Venezuela trip are requested to see Mr. Vagabond in room 727 at 3.15 today."

"Those who are involved in the spring break trip to the Canary Islands should have their passports by March 1st."

"There will be a meeting today in Room Quatorze for all students going to the Quebec Winter Carnival. No separatists, please."

"An urgent meeting will be held today for those who plan to take the London-Paris trip during spring break. All seats are now filled. If enough are interested, we'll hire another plane."

It fairly makes your head swim, especially when your own idea of a trip south is 100 miles to the city for a weekend, a trip west means a visit to great-grandad, and a trip east means you're going to a funeral or a wedding among the relatives.

Next thing you know, this travel binge will bulge over into the elementary schools, and great 747-loads of little shavers from Grade Eight will be descending on the unsuspecting residents of Hong Kong and Rio de Janeiro. Lord help them. The residents, not the kids.

Perhaps this sounds like sour grapes. Well, it is. As Shaw said: "The trouble with youth is that it is wasted on the young." And as Smiley says: "The trouble with travel is that it is wasted on kids who don't know a Grecian urn from an Italian pizza."

Oh, it's not that I haven't travelled. I've been to Great Britain. And spent two years staggering around in the blackout or wading through the torrential rains of Bonnie Scotland. I've been to France. Slept five weeks in a tent in an orchard in Normandy. Been to Belgium. Antwerp; buzz-bombs. Know Holland well. Spent two weeks locked in a box-car in a railway siding at Utrecht.

Am intimately acquainted with Germany. Was bombed in Braunschweig and Leipzig, and spent a delightful six months in salubrious Pomerania, as a guest of the Third Reich.

Oh, I've been around all right. But somehow it wasn't quite the same. Ratting through Deutschland on a train with a 10-day stubble of beard on your chin and a tag-end of sour black bread stuffed into your battle-dress blouse is not quite similar to climbing aboard a 747 with your tote-bag and waiting for the stewardess to bring your first meal.

Would I trade? Not on your life.

The Free Press Back Issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Wednesday, March 27, 1968

Mr. and Mrs. David Russell celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary Sunday at the home of their son and daughter on Main St. Both are still active. They have spent most of their life on the family farm on the Fifth Line of Erin Township.

Mr. and Mrs. Syd Lamb and family flew to Miami Beach last Monday on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary. Mr. Lamb returned Friday and Mrs. Lamb and children will return this Thursday.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, April 17, 1958

Fire destroyed the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. Thompson in Erin Township on Tuesday morning of this week. Believed caused by faulty wiring, the fire had made headway before the arrival of the Acton Fire Department. Following a five minute run to the scene, firemen had the blaze under control within a short period of time. Neighbors assisted in carrying out belongings before the roof caved in.

Acton Chamber of Commerce held a special dinner meeting last night (Wednesday) in the Legion Auditorium when 170 men and women attended to mark Chamber of Commerce week. Honored during the dinner was Miss Gayle Hulford of Acton, who set a new women's record for Eastern Canada in the world of five pins by bowling a 1067 triple. Also honored was Acton Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year, G.A. Dills.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, April 5, 1928

The meeting of Knox church Young People's Society on Monday evening was of a devotional nature. The scripture reading was given by Marjorie Near and Miss Emma Robinson led in prayer. Miss Isabel Anderson contributed a splendid vocal solo. An Easter story was given by Miss Nellie Anderson, which was very appropriate. Misses Bessie Rawlings and Lorraine Wilson contributed a vocal duet and a solo chorus number by Mr. A. Burton and members of the choir.

The following is the list of pupils who won a place on the honor roll during the past month at the Acton public school.

Senior fourth, Esther Taylor, Lorena Lashbrook, Herbert Taylor, Norman Gibson, Velma Blair, Lois Atkinson.

Junior fourth, Wilo Near, Joe McCann, Marguerite Roszell, Audrey McComb, Kathleen Cook, Tom Nicol.

Senior third, Harvey Hassard, John Nicol, Ezio Marzo, Teddy Elliott, Teddy Hansen, Sidney Worth and Tommy Coole.

Junior third, Margaret Arnold, Harold Skilling, George Switzer, Elsie Anderson, Vera Rawlings, Violet White.

Junior third, Ruth Jennings, Barbara Taylor, Annie Gibbens, Roderick Ryder, Jessie Trotter, Jennie Cox. Senior second, Kathleen Huard, Harvey McCutcheon, Frank Jones, Henry Ivers, Neil McNabb, Hector Lambert.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press of Thursday, April 4, 1878

There was very little April fooling done here Monday.

The Whiteside murder case was reviewed in the Court of Chancery, when the will was disputed. A host of lawyers were engaged by both sides. Robert Whiteside, who is admitted to be a miserly old man, was fouly murdered in the township of Esquesing near Acton, by some person or persons unknown.

Mrs. Whiteside said she knew her husband was odd before she married him, but not as bad as he was. He was a shoemaker in Ireland and they were both natives of Ireland.

Mrs. Whiteside said "From 1847 to 1863 when the will was signed we were fed on very inferior food. I clothed the children by my own labours or by gifts from friends; my husband used to eat grasshoppers and said they were the locusts mentioned in the Scripture, he took bran and put gooseberries in it and called it fruit cake fit for Queen Victoria; as a beverage he preferred the water potatoes had been boiled in; he mostly slept in his clothes. At the time he made out his will I do not consider his mind was right. That week he swallowed pieces of frozen mash and said I had put fish hooks in it. He was strange on religious questions. He put on my nightshirt and cap one night and went outside the house to frighten some men he supposed to be there.

OUR READERS WRITE:

Fire lazy workers

Dear Editor: We all want the most for our money, the biggest bang for our buck.

In this spirit, I have introduced the following motion in the House of Commons to control the size of the federal bureaucracy and protect our tax dollar:

"That in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of discontinuing hiring in the public service for a period of one year, requiring staff to be acquired by internal arrangement, the freeze to be reassessed at the end of this one year period with the possibility of extending it further, if desirable."

Even though growth of the federal civil service has been reduced to less than one per cent, (6 per cent) overall, and absolutely reversed (less than one per cent annually in many departments, it is imperative that the size of the bureaucracy be reduced to an even more manageable level. Through attrition, it can be achieved.

This freeze goes hand in hand with another motion which I have seconded on behalf of my colleague, Dr. Frank Maine, the Liberal member for Wellington:

"That in the opinion of this House, the Government should consider the advisability of introducing legislation which would make merit or lack of it the determining factor in the civil service employment, by expediting the dismissal of incompetent employees giving bonuses to highly competent employees and ending all automatic raises."

These two motions would go a long way to make the public service more efficient and economical.

Adopting the private sector practice of firing lazy and incompetent workers and providing merit incentives to others decreases the size of staff while increasing efficiency and morale. The remaining employees are usually the ones who get the job done anyway.

According to the old saying, "One rotten apple can spoil the barrel." The many good civil servants would welcome the change as much as anyone. The work ethic is thereby promoted to both the public and private sectors.

Since the honor system does not succeed in each and every case in the civil service or elsewhere, a stricter work place relationship is needed to eliminate abuses, with greater emphasis on the employee to earn the right to keep his job and the supervisor to enforce this responsibility.

A start has been made, it will be pursued.

Yours sincerely
Dr. Frank A. Philbrook,
Member of Parliament,
Halton.

More letters on page 5

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Business and Editorial Office



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