

The Acton Free Press

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Founded in 1875
Don McDonald, Publisher

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Back at square one

Elizabeth Davidson, a Toronto architect who has conducted independent research into the proposed shopping plaza in Acton's east end, recently said if people were willing to invest in development in downtown Acton they should come forward with their plans quickly in order to convince planning board and council the plaza development is not needed.

Mrs. Davidson, obviously, had not counted on planning board being so decisive in its rejection of the plaza at a meeting a week ago Tuesday night. The board rejected the proposal by an 8-0 vote despite overwhelming approval voiced by about 300 people at a public meeting the previous week.

Planning board's outright rejection of the proposal came as a surprise to people who attended the public meeting and supported the plaza proposal. There are two letters this week from disappointed citizens who point out the board's decision makes it appear the public meeting was simply window dressing, that the meeting was called merely to placate the public.

The letter writers have a point. If the board called the meeting just so plaza supporters could get their feelings off their chests then they did the people of Acton and area a disservice.

However, if they called a public meeting to find out new evidence for a plaza or a groundswell of opinion in favor, then they obviously were within their rights to have a review.

Several people who attended the public meeting came away convinced they had made a case for the plaza especially since chairman Mike Armstrong rebuffed an effort by a downtown businessman to show more evidence why a plaza was not needed. They surmised that

discussion at the next meeting of the board would favor the plaza proposal, a feeling evidently shared by the developer.

However, although there is undeniably much public support for the plaza, the board could not proceed against the advice of its own planner, who said the proposal is "premature due to a lack of a planned population base to support the application and due to a possible impact on the Acton urban area's commercial infrastructure." The planner also noted there is no provision for the plaza in Acton's official plan.

For the board to have tossed aside planning principles after two previous rejections of the proposal would have been surprising, even with the entire community lined up against them.

The board passed its recommendation on to council which undoubtedly will concur with their advice, noting it is in the town's best interests.

Meanwhile developer Jerry Sprackman says he will appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board to have planning board's decision overturned. Many will wish him luck, contending that public opinion has been disregarded.

Indeed the entire exercise to date has left us back at square one. Unless council disregards their own planning board or the OMB reverses the decision a plaza in the east end is still a few years away.

Meanwhile, we wonder if shopping in Acton will improve as downtown merchants anticipate. Indeed, as architect Elizabeth Davidson points out, people willing to invest in downtown Acton should come forward with plans quickly in order to convince the public a plaza is not needed. The public does want better shopping facilities and many saw the plaza as a means to that end.

Deaths sadden many

The deaths of two well known citizens last week was a shock to many in this community. Both Lena Mann and Charles Landsborough were well known and their passing is mourned by multitudes of friends and acquaintances as well as members of the family.

Mrs. Mann came from Manitoulin Island as a young girl and lived on Arthur St. for 35 years. Here she raised a family and took part in many activities of the community. She was an active member of Knox Church where she taught Sunday School, started the first junior choir, was a life member of the Alert Evening Auxiliary and active in the Ladies Aid. She was also active in the Acton Golden Agers, being both pianist and treasurer. She loved baking, quilting, gardening, music and tracing her own family

tree.

Charlie Landsborough, a native of Acton, was almost a fixture at Acton Baptist church where he was organist, treasurer and clerk but he was also well known for his musical activities. He played with three bands—the Lorne Scots, Guelph Musical Society and the Acton Citizens' Band—and it was seldom he missed a parade. He had an avid interest in band festival competitions and loved gardening, photography and travelling. Charlie was purchasing agent at Beardmore until his retirement a few years ago.

These two figures gave much of their time to make this community a better place in which to live. We'll all be poorer for their passing but also richer, knowing they left so many fine memories as they passed this way.

Help give blood

The gift of life is the most precious gift anyone can give. Yet, last October, only 103 people, in a town of over 7,000 people bothered to give this gift.

The local Red Cross group is becoming discouraged at the lack of interest shown whenever blood donor clinic time comes around on the calendar. Because of this attitude, the clinic is in danger of folding forever. This is indeed unfortunate.

An Acton man was scheduled for a major heart operation last fall. The operation had to be postponed three times due to lack of blood. Three times he was admitted into the hospital, until finally the doctor got the go-

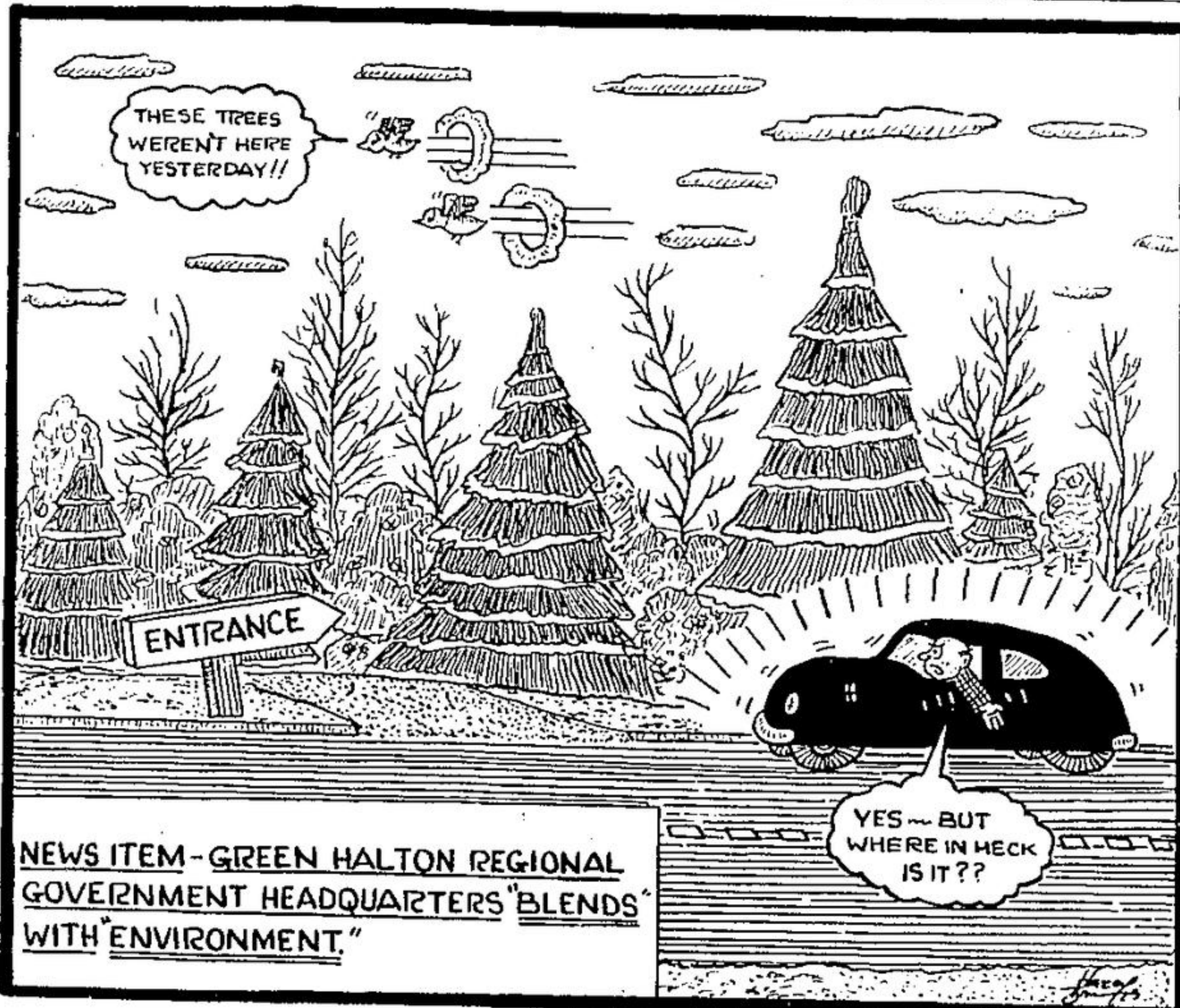
ahead.

If the Acton clinics and others in other small towns die, what is to become of these people who must have operations? Are they to die because of a few people's selfishness?

That local man was finally able to have the operation, and it was successful. But what if no one bothered to give blood? What would have happened to him, and the thousands before and after him?

If everyone gave a pint of blood whenever there was a clinic, they could be saving their own life, not just that of a stranger.

Please support next week's clinic.—H.M.



Blue February Monday

By the time this appears in print, the worst of the suffering in Canada will be over. And I don't mean that dreadful February cold snap which turned us into our annual winter condition, a nation of misanthropes.

Burst water pipes, cars so cold you can't even put them into reverse to back out in the morning, and temperatures that would freeze the brains of a brass monkey are bad enough. But we're used to them. We know that in another four months, we'll be gasping in a heat wave and beating off mosquitoes.

No, that's not the suffering we did this February. It was being smugly satisfied on a Thursday night, mildly dismayed on a Saturday afternoon, and utterly humiliated on a Sunday night that caused the suffering.

Talk about blue Monday. That Monday in Feb., after them Roosians had kicked the living stuffing out of Canada's finest, was so blue it was almost purple.

I'm not saying that I, personally, suffer when Canada's primary export, hockey players, is no longer marketable. I'm not saying that I'm just saying that I bleed a little, internally, when a bunch of rotten red, pinko communists make a group of fine, young liberal, capitalists look like a bunch of old-age pensioners whose Geritol has been cut off. Right after the second game, I went to the clinic and had a cardiogram, just in case.

I must say we took it well, as a nation. For once, there were no alibis. How could

by
Bill
Smiley



there be, when hundreds of millions of people saw our collective Canadian noses being rubbed in it?

Sports writers, their guts churning, praised the play of the Russians and intimated that they knew all along what would happen. As they always do, after the event.

The Canadian players showed more grace. The best of them simply admitted they were beaten soundly by a superior team. But they knew in their heart that they, and all their highly paid buddies, were facing not a physical Siberia, but a Siberia of the soul.

They were the Best in the West, and they had not been just beaten but thoroughly trounced, by the Best in the East, where hockey is a relatively new sport.

Not for me to ask, "How did it happen?" All the experts have agreed that the Russians skate better, pass better, and are infinitely superior in physical condition to the pampered Canadian pros, who weighed an average of nine pounds more than their opponents.

It is only for me to ask, "Why do we suffer so much when we're licked in hockey?" And I think I know the answer to that.

For a century or so, Canadians have been hewers of wood and drawers of water. Fair enough. We had lots of wood and water, and still have and other people need them.

But we also had three superior finished products, manufactured at home, that nobody else in the world could touch, when it came to quality: maple syrup, rye whiskey, and hockey, players.

Our supremacy in these departments is virtually ended. Our whiskey has been watered more and more, our maple syrup has been thinned to the consistency of greasy spoon gravy, and our hockey players, with a few stalwart exceptions, are more impressed with their hair-ros, their press clippings, and their financial statements than they are with beating their opponents.

There is a sadness here. Rye whiskey is bad for the liver, maple syrup bad for the teeth, so perhaps their denigration is not a national disaster. But to have a hockey team that is the second or third or fourth best in the world? That is unthinkable.

Every red-blooded, middle-aged male in Canada has hockey in his veins. He personally knows, or his best friend does, or he lives in, or lives in the next town to, or is sixth cousin of, or grew up with, or was preceded by only 10 years by, in school, a genuine hockey player, who made it to Junior A, or Senior A, or even the NHL, or one of its farm teams.

Two of the quarterbacks on my high school football team, Les Douglas and Tony Licari, made it to the Detroit Red Wings organization. My brother-in-law, Jack Buell, played Junior A and Senior A and became a referee.

My grandson, at the age of two, was given a hockey stick and demolished his grandmother's hardwood floors in the living-room, smashing a puck around the floor with great vigor and a certain lack of control. (She finally put her foot down when he insisted on scrimmaging around the piano while she was giving lessons.)

To add insult to injury, this idiotic idea of Iona Campagnola, Minister of Jocks, has popped up. She wants to give \$18.5 million of my money and yours to four Canadian cities, so that they can build big arenas to accommodate four more losers in an NHL that is already so watered-down with mediocre talent that 60 per cent of them couldn't have made a Senior A team 30 years ago.

What she should do is support an Order-in-council which proclaims that, with the emergence of Red China, Russia is now a second-rate power, not worthy to be faced-off against.

Then Allan Egleson can organize another Seis of the Century with China, where they learned to skate about eight years ago. We'd probably win it by one goal in 1980. And lose it by 10 in '81.

Back issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Wednesday, March 12, 1969
Fire completely gutted the Nassagaweya farm home of Bob Watson this morning, leaving a family of four homeless.

Acton Junior Farmer's play Cleaned and Pressed, 1969 winner of the Halton Drama Festival, received a fine review but trailed the Waterloo entry in the zone competition. Thelma Kirkwood and Jim Ware were given honorable mention for their portrayals.

A congregation of 150 gathered in Trinity church to observe World Day of Prayer. Taking part were Mrs. Vic Bristow, Mrs. Charles Landsborough, Miss Isobel Anderson, Mrs. S. G. Thoman, Mrs. John Kanninga, Mrs. Donna Bell, Mrs. Garnet McKenzie, with guest speaker Miss Cynthia Blades.

New dishes for Eden Mills community hall were presented as the culmination of a centennial project. Bob Gilbertson of the Community Club accepted the dishes from Eden Mills and Eden Crest Institutes.

Mrs. Grace McEnery was guest speaker at the World Day of Prayer service for Churchill and Ballinafad ladies, with Mrs. Irene Swackhamer key lady. Other leaders were Mrs. Elva Winter, Mrs. Isabel McDonald, Mrs. Verna Stephen and Mrs. Yvonne Hamilton.

Mr. and Mrs. John R. Sprowl and Mr. James Jessiman were honored by residents of the communities of Dublin, Bannockburn and Erin at Ballinafad hall. Mr. and Mrs. Sprowl have sold their farm.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, March 5, 1959

Formation of an Acton and District Self-Help Employment Bureau receive unanimous approval by over 100 unemployed workers at a mass meeting in the Legion hall on Monday morning. This action followed the recent announcement that the Avro Arrow project was being discontinued and 14,000 workers were laid off. Committee members are Dennis Lawler, Art Johnson, Ted Blunn, Len Almond, Joe White, Jeff Robbins.

Outstanding decorations set the carnival theme for the Amalgamated Acton Home and School Association's second annual Fun Fair Saturday morning and afternoon in the Robert Little school. Mrs. Monty Root, convener of decorations, displayed great originality. Circulating through the rooms were clowns Herb Cook and Sam Brunelle, with little Miss Beverly Brunelle giving out balloons. Conveners included Mrs. F. Heller, Mrs. Lois Mackenzie, Mrs. J. Hurst, Mrs. K. Allen, Mrs. Herman Freuler, Mrs. E. Lidkea, Miss Alice Sidey, Mrs. George Haggert, Mrs. J. Dowding, Mrs. C. Leatherland, Mrs. E. Jennings. General convener was Mrs. W. Sprouton. The event was again an outstanding success.

50 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, March 7, 1929

The play that proved so popular with Ballinafad audiences that the crowd could not be accommodated will be presented in Acton Wednesday evening next. The Path across the Hill has a cast of ten characters. The plan of the hall opened at Brown's drug store this week.

On Friday evening last the regular meeting of the Actondale U.F.Y.P.O. was held in the parish hall. Debaters on the subject "resolved that the school has a greater influence in molding character than the home" were Miss Violet Crossman and Mr. Leslie Swackhamer for the affirmative and Miss Velma Murray and Mr. Roy McKeown for the negative. Judges were Miss Bennett, Mrs. Somerville and Dr. Johnson.

Mr. James Symon has leased the Co-operative store building and will remove his stock of hardware to the new stand. The present store occupied by Mr. Symon will be used by Johnstone and Co., who own the building, for additional room for their furniture and undertaking business.

Dublin Literary Society met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Brownlow. On the program were Dorothy Frank, Edith Braeken, Mrs. Somerville, Berniece Braeken, Margaret Waldie and Mr. Reg. Penner.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Acton Free Press of Thursday, March 13, 1879

On the front page—advertisements, a continued story, a long poem, articles on Ostrich Breeding in Australia, The Scientific Mode of Cremation, Gigantic Devil Fishes, Mozart, and a few jokes. Local news was inside the four-page paper.

Editorial concludes: "We of the male sex are very unjust to womankind... Every marriage should be a complete partnership for life of heart and purse. We know of no moral law which gives the husband any rights the wife has not, and that family is a badly regulated one in which the husband graciously gives the wife the money she spends."

Free Press Letters

Why public meet on plaza?

Dear Sir:

In view of the recent action of the local councillors and planning board re the building of a supermarket to the east of Acton, this letter, no doubt, will simply be an exercise in futility. I do, however, feel that I simply have to protest the dictatorial attitude taken at the meeting held in the Trafalgar Road building last week. Anyone with the smallest degree of ESP could sense from the outset of the meeting that the wishes of the people expressed in the local High School building on Feb. 14 last would mean nothing to the councillors and planning board officials.

This raises the question as to why the public meeting was called at all. My understanding was that it was held to find out what the feeling of the general public was with regard to the creation of a plaza on the above-mentioned site. That meeting overwhelmingly supported the idea. Most of us are not so much in favor of a plaza. What most of us would like is a good supermarket. Surely a compromise could be worked out with Zehr's representative

on that score.

When one of our councillors for whom our family and several of our friends voted at the last election was approached by me on this matter, his answer was that he objected to Mr. Sprackman's over-aggressive attitude at previous meetings and to the fact that he objected to being treated as though he were the possessor of a lower IQ. Some of us feel that we have been made to feel that same way by the recent actions of our councillors and planning board. We are not mature enough intellectually.

Democracy has been defined as "government of the people by the people for the people." It would appear as though we have lost it under regional government. The recent attitude of council seems to support that view, too. The upshot of this will, of course, be more business of a shopping nature going out of town. This saddens me.

Sincerely yours,
A. Walter Fosbury,
124 Tidey Ave.,