

Teachers' rebuttal for last week's PD days editorial...



Barb Munro of Co-op Nursery talks with Courtney Fisher during the nursery's open house Monday.



Margaret Masales looks over son Ryan's school work at the M.Z. Bennett school open house Monday evening. He's in grade three.

(Continued from page 1)

6.) One teacher said we should divide their wages by the number of hours they work and we'd find they aren't making that much per hour. We didn't raise this aspect because we assumed everyone knew teachers are paid a salary and their jobs involve more than just teaching from 9 to 4. Extra curricular activities couldn't exist if teachers didn't work overtime. They work on lesson plans, marking, etc. in hours outside of class. But teachers must also remember their situation, working overtime is common among salaried workers in business and industry, so they aren't unique.

7.) A teacher suggested parents are upset with PD days because families where both parents work, or in single parent families, the parents lose their cheap babysitting service and must make other arrangements for care of their children on those days. This is the complaint with some parents, but certainly not all. We've heard complaints about PD days from mothers who don't work too. A lot of parents are angered by PD days, not because they lose their babysitting service, as the teacher called school, but because they are concerned about their children being educated. Do PD days cost taxpayers money? In one way no, since teachers would be paid for the day regardless if they are in a seminar or in a classroom. But when families have to hire a babysitter for a PD day it does cost taxpayers money, as one person involved in education pointed out to me.

8.) Teachers noted they take other forms of professional development in their spare time during the school year and this is paid for by themselves or their teacher federations, which they support financially. Is this unlike business and industry? I've known people in business who improved themselves, sometimes with no guarantee of advancement or a raise, by paying for night school or attending seminars. One teacher disputed this saying in business and industry firms always pay for

employees courses.

9.) Several teachers said they don't choose the PD days, the board does. They are right. They are approved by the board, but on the recommendations of a body called the Modified School year committee, on which 13 people sit including two trustees, representatives of the teachers' federations, principals, consultants, co-ordinators and other administrators. Since the federation reps are on the committee, the teachers can't say they don't have input.

10.) Did we suggest PD days aren't needed? Teachers say that was in the editorial, but re-reading it I found "we have no quarrel with the need for professional development days, just with having them in the period between September and June" and that was the whole point of the piece.

But in discussing this issue with parents and teachers in the past week a couple of new ideas come to mind. If teachers don't want PD days in the summer, and some of their PD day work must be done during the school year they say, then how about professional development days on Saturdays or some evening sessions. This is done in business and industry sometimes.

The school year structure is a throwback to our agricultural past, children were needed on the farm in the summer. That isn't common now, so maybe the province, teachers and boards should look at another idea. Operate schools in the summer, and combine Christmas holidays, winter break, and summer holidays into a four, six or eight week period in say January and February when some days are lost anyway because of weather problems. There might also be some savings for taxpayers in heat and lighting etc.

11.) I'm told the only requirements on the form of the school year from the province is that there be 185 teaching days. Halton has traditionally had more, and that's been reported in the past. The province says teachers can have professional development days, but not when and how often.

12.) Something parents should know is that a few teachers have told us in the past they don't like PD days, they'd rather be teaching, some have also said sessions are a waste of time. Others have said some sessions are very worthwhile while some times they aren't, which could be said also for seminars and workshops in other sectors.

13.) A teacher suggested their number of vacation days compares with senior people in industry. A comparison of vacations for teachers and senior people in other sectors is difficult because many teachers don't think July and August count since they aren't paid. If the summer is counted, then it's very rare indeed the person outside teaching who has 10 weeks vacation.

14.) A teacher noted they are in school in the fall preparing for the return of children. We didn't mention this previously because we thought everyone knew it, especially since we have often carried photos in early September of teachers getting ready.

15.) PD days don't improve teachers' qualifications and so there is no financial benefit to the teachers from having them.

In conclusion I sympathize with angry parents about PD days. Teachers aren't totally to blame, but the public perception has long been that PD days are the teachers' fault. I think the board and teachers should be looking at alternative ways to

solve this issue which don't result in school days when classes aren't held. It wasn't acceptable to parents when they were held on random days throughout the year and aren't any more acceptable now when they are scheduled before or after holidays like Easter.

Parents are never going to confront their child's teacher with their objections, so teachers may not be gauging accurately the depth of taxpayers' anger about PD days.

We agree with teachers who say they may not have done a very good public relations job on these days. The initiative for changes should come from the teachers. I think the teachers should seriously consider going to their leadership and urge them to talk to the board about trying a few evening PD sessions, or Saturday sessions, or any other alternative they might come up with, as an experiment. Such a move would go a long way towards appeasing taxpayers and making such an effort would no doubt be a public relations triumph.

Falklands...

(Continued from page 1)

Eva recalls it never dawned on her the Falkland Islands belonged to anyone but Argentina. All through her schooling she was taught the Malvinas (Falklands) were part of her country. It was after she met Geoff and he told her the British claimed the island did she ever hear anything to the contrary.

Until the past month, Eva jokes, whenever things were quiet at home, one of them would challenge the ownership of the islands and a battle would break out.

However, now that their two countries are fighting over them, "the fun has gone out of it," Eva says, and they have left the fighting to others.

Both are convinced the conflict is only a ploy to take the citizens' minds off the economic situation in both countries. Geoff estimates \$500 million was spent just getting the British fleet to the Argentinas before any shots were fired. Before it is all over, he guesses, some \$1 billion will have been spent on both sides.

"For that amount of money the islands could have been bought and sold several times over," the teacher said.

Geoff feels haunts of a World War II mistake play on British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's mind as she wades closer and closer to all-out war over the islands.

He explains as a boy growing up in England he always read how Britain made a mistake in not resisting Adolf Hitler early and England's failure to resist reoccupation of the Reine. He thinks this may have something to do with what he considers drastic actions over the Falklands.

Regarding the recent Argentinian surrender on South Georgia Island, Geoff says that was deliberately done so suddenly Britain is the aggressor.

Eva compares the entire incident with her children fighting over who is going to be the first out the door in the morning.

"It is stupid, I cannot believe they would fight over something like that," she states. They never really considered their private joke as anything serious at all.

She believes both countries should step aside and give the island and the mineral rights to the people who live on the island. Geoff claims it is not as easy as that because a good many of the island residents are employees of the Falkland Island Corporation which has its head office in England. Once a person retires, they must move to England or New Zealand.

Eva claims the incident is a restaging of The Mouse That Roared. She explains in that book a small country declares war against the United States so they can lose and get American aid. Her scenario, she says, is that both countries cooked it all up so both could get US aid.

She pointed out however, that in The Mouse That Roared the small country won the war and ended up having to support the United States.

"It is a tragedy," said Geoff, "because there are going to be some people who get killed. There's going to be a lot of wasted time and resources." He noted it is funny how there always seems to be money to go to war.

Geoff cringes when he thinks what a half a billion dollars could do for the British economy, or the Argentinian economy.

"They talk about fighting for principles and rights," he said, "I think they are forgetting about people's rights to eat."

Eva says she believes the irony of the situation is that it is no longer a matter of the Falkland Islands and who possesses them, but a matter of saving face. "It has nothing to do with people or countries, just saving face," she says glumly. Neither person cares in whose hands the islands end up, just as long as it is done peacefully.

Eva feels both sides are wrong however. "This has become relevant because it could be the end of the world," she says, referring to the two super powers eventually going to war, backing the smaller countries and setting off a nuclear bomb.

Geoff feels he has the perfect solution: Argentina should let Britain have the Falkland Islands and Argentina can have Northern Ireland. That way, he says, both will have a troublesome piece of real estate on each others door step.



Arline White of the Acton Cancer unit drew the Actario tickets Saturday.

Actario winners

Wayne Mason and his wife, RR 2 Acton, were the winners of the monthly Actario trip draw for a Las Vegas vacation.

Joe Schouten, RR 3 Milton, was the winner of the weekly draw for \$350.

Mary Watson, 153 Tidy Ave., won vouchers from IGA, Home Hardware, Acton Family Restaurant, and Acton Family Cleaners, while Bill and Marg Toth, 62 Brock St., took home vouchers from Stedman's, Acton Pharmacy and Family Cleaners. Vouchers from Nielsen's, Acton Photo and Camera, Ed's In 'N Out and Family Cleaners went to Walter and Pauline Bartow, 35 Church St., East and Vic and Penny Bristow won vouchers from Jug City, Family Cleaners, Acton Bowling Lanes and AB Foodland.

Approve Speyside TV tower

by Steve Arnold

Speyside residents have lost the latest round in their battle to keep a Guelph company from erecting a cable television tower near their homes.

The Ontario Municipal Board approved a local bylaw amending the rezoning on the land to permit construction of the tower in a decision released last week.

A further hearing before the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission will be required before the actual erection can take place.

At the OMB hearing held in Milton March 25, neighbors of the site objected to approval of the bylaw because they feared the new tower would damage their property values and expose them to a health hazard from the microwave relay dishes to be used on the site.

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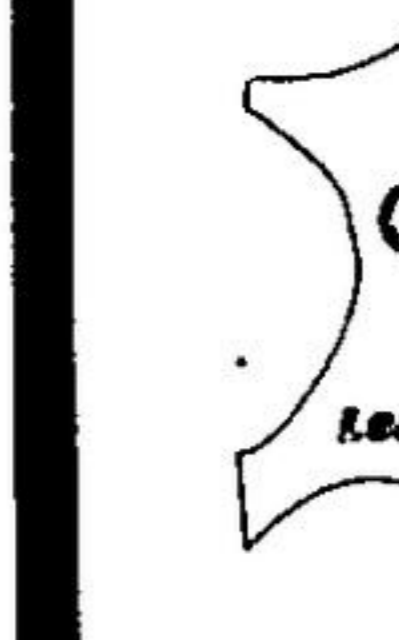
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