

The Acton Free Press

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Crown Trust affair big mess for board

One can't help but feel a bit for Halton Board of Education trustees these days over the mess they have on their hands as a result of the Crown Trust affair.

They already had a lot of egg on their faces when it became public they had \$4 million on deposit with the beleaguered financial institution.

Now they are more embarrassed by the news that it's not \$4 million, but \$6.5 million they had seized by the province.

And it's now evident that there was at least some staff bungling, word that \$2.5 million hadn't escaped seizure lay in an envelope in the board's finance department for several days without anyone bothering to look inside. Knowing sooner would have made no difference though.

Clearly the motive of the staff, and hence the trustees since they are ultimately responsible for all staff actions, was to deposit funds needed later where they'd earn the most for Halton taxpayers.

Their intentions were good, but the results of those good intentions could be disastrous for all ratepayers in Halton, and for the trustees personally in terms of political damage.

Poor provincial regulations governing trust companies is at the root of the problem.

Before investing funds with any financial institution the board checks it out carefully with Queen's Park, exactly what was done in this case.

One saving fact for the trustees is that they aren't alone in this predicament. Numerous public bodies in Ontario have seen their funds put in jeopardy by the Crown Trust debacle.

However, more than one person with financial expertise has suggested to us that more thorough financial investigation would have prevented the board being in this mess. Had they looked at the situation more closely, we're told, finance staff would have found that a green light from Queen's Park meant little since regulations governing trust

companies have long left a lot to be desired.

It's obvious now that all board investments should be reviewed to make sure they are safe. Taking the province's word for it isn't enough.

Regional and local councillors in Halton Hills are breathing a sigh of relief these days that they too aren't in the same mess. They deposit their funds only with banks. Halton Separate School Board has a policy to deposit funds only with chartered banks also.

Possibly the board should consider in the future sacrificing a bit on the return side for more financial safety. But then hindsight is always 20%20.

Those who suggest this is a bigger mess than the region's \$1.1 million deficit of a few years back are right and wrong, at the same time.

To compare the two and say the same kind of incompetence on the part of bureaucrats and politicians is responsible is to compare apples and oranges. Regional staff problems were much greater than any the board has, current evidence in this matter indicates.

At the same time, while the deficit and the Crown Trust fiascos both have financial, as well as political, ramifications, the impact could be far greater from the board's problem, more than six times worse to be exact.

It's hard to say how the board will solve this problem since it could be months or even years before the mess is straightened out. But one thing is sure, it will cost taxpayers money or result in cuts from a budget we have been told often is already bare bones. If the board loses all or part of its \$6.5 million it will cost us a lot one way or another. Even if the board eventually recovers all of its money it will cost taxpayers some money, interest paid to borrow \$6.5 million more.

It will be cold comfort to taxpayers and parents to point the finger of major blame for this mess at the province.—G.M.



From the editor's desk

Sad, but glad Joe's going

by Gord Murray
Free Press editor

You just had to feel sorry for Joe Clark Friday night. I know I did.

Regardless if you were pulling for him or not, I don't think there's many people who'd say he hasn't tried his very best and it was sad to see his dreams being shattered in front of the entire country.

That's not to say I was disappointed in the outcome of the leadership review vote, though I am puzzled that any group could allow themselves to be put in the ludicrous position where a minority can dictate to the majority.

The vote turned out exactly the way I want, the Tories are going to hold a leadership convention, and that's just what is needed.

I'm hoping Pierre Trudeau told us the truth when he said in 1980 he wouldn't lead the Liberals in another election. I won't miss him a bit. If the Grits have a new leader the only way the next election will be fair and present Canadians with our first real choice in years will be if the Conservatives too have a new leader.

Frankly, like a lot of Canadians, I'm fed up with only having a choice between the lesser of two evils, or put another way two awful choices for the prime minister's office and a national government. Surely we Canadians haven't been so wicked that we must be saddled with the likes of Trudeau or Clark as an option again.

I'm pretty jaded, though still fascinated, by politics. I don't for a moment think two new leaders and a new government and prime minister sometime in the next few years will change Canadians' lot much in the future.

But, darn it all, wouldn't it be more interesting the next time we troop to the polls if we had two new choices even if they aren't much better than what we have now.

So, while I was delighted with the

prospect of a Conservative leadership convention and believe the delegates will dump Joe with a great thud, I did feel badly for him.

I truly think he's a decent man who has worked very hard for his country and party. At the same time he's an awkward, bumbling sort who Canadians likely will never feel comfortable about putting back in the prime minister's job.

Despite his limited strengths and many flaws, you have to admire and respect his courage, mettle and guts.

It took a lot of guts to stand there and tell the whole country that despite two years of hard work only 5 per cent more of his own people supported him now than after his nine month government came tumbling down. And it took guts after all the crap he's been through since he became leader to announce he'll fight to win his job back.

I don't agree with some pundits that this latest Tory bloodletting and the upcoming leadership fight will throw the next election into the laps of the Liberals even before the battle begins.

I'm far from certain that crowning a new Liberal leader will be a peaceful, civilized affair either. If Turner, McDonald, Chretien, MacEachen and a few others all seek Trudeau's job it could be pretty messy for the Grits also.

Now, back to the Tory prospects. If Davis or Lougheed enter the race I'm sure it will be all over but the crying for Joe who, as well as other Conservative leadership hopefuls.

Either of these premiers would present formidable opposition to whoever assumes the Liberal leadership. I'm not sure either would be very good Opposition leaders if they lost though. They are pretty accustomed to power.

If either of these heavyweights wants the top job ever, now's the

time to go I'd say. If they hold back and Clark or one of the others wins the job they'll probably lose the next election. That would mean Davis or Lougheed could win the title at the next convention, but by then a new Liberal leader might be entrenched and both Davis and Lougheed would be facing at least a few years in opposition before they get their crack at the brass ring.

I figured if either of them announced quickly they want Joe's job, most of the competition would back off and that would greatly limit the damage a leadership convention could inflict on the party. But if they play it coy and wait until they see what everyone else is doing or leave themselves available for a draft they could wind up with a party in worse shambles than usual for the Tories, as well as chance blowing what they should be able to easily win.

For a moment now let's assume neither goes for the title.

I still don't think Joe will be able to hold on to his job. So we're left with a choice of Peter Pocklington, Brian Mulroney, or Peter Blaikie from outside the caucus, as well as Sinc Stevens (an Esqueusing born lad), Flora MacDonald, John Crosbie, David Crombie, Michael Wilson, Don Mazankowski, John Fraser, or even some others from the Tory benches.

I don't see anyone on that list who could beat a Turner. And if we are to have a true choice in the next election the Tories have to have someone leading them who is a match for a Liberal biggie.

If Davis and Lougheed pass on the crown, then I'll be pulling for John Crosbie.

I don't think he's prime minister timber or that he can beat a Turner, but at least with him we'll have some laughs since he's a pretty funny guy. And a few laughs might make Ottawa more tolerable.

Back issues

10 years ago

January 31, 1973

Esqueusing Reeve Tom Hill said he will protest both the county council and provincial government levels against the proposal to maintain Milton as a single Central Halton unit in a four borough Halton Region.

Some of the best ice conditions in years attracted hundreds of skaters to Fairy Lake on the weekend.

The Acton Legion Choralliers sang a program of songs for an appreciative group at the new home for the aged at Elora.

Specials this week at Lovell's Meat Market are: sliced side bacon \$1.10 a lb., ground chuck 89¢ a lb., blade and short rib roasts 99¢ a lb. and small link sausage 75¢ a lb.

The employees at Building Products won this year's National Safety Award defeating the Winnipeg plant in accident free hours.

20 years ago

January 31, 1953

Thawing out frozen pipes was the cause of a minor blaze Wednesday evening at the residence of Murray Bateman, Church St.

The pupils of Robert Little School selected "Tom Sawyer" for their annual public school operetta. Music supervisor Glenn Banks and a staff of teachers are busy this week selecting the characters.

George A. Kerr, a 38-year-old Burlington lawyer, was chosen as Progressive Conservative candidate for the next Provincial election Friday.

In spite of being on the tail end team, Merv Marshall has been named the 1952-53 Most Valuable Player awarded by the Tri-County Hockey Association.

Men's president-elect G. W. McKenzie visited clubs in Pennsylvania.

50 years ago

January 28, 1933

A well attended and enthusiastic organization meeting of the Liberal party was held in Acton on Tuesday evening, at Lasby's Hotel.

Specials this week at Carroll's, Mill St., are: oats 1 lb. pkg. 19¢, 40 oz. jar of jam 23¢, 1 lb. tin of salmon 22¢, tomatoes, two large tins 19¢ and 24 lb. bag of flour 49¢.

Even the oldest old-timer admits that the January of 1933 is a bit unusual in weather conditions.

Mayor James Justice, of Erin, has been chosen Warden of Wellington County.

Jean Smith, of Acton, plays on the Guelph Ladies' Hockey Team. Jean is a defence player and is considered one of the best on the Royal City line-up.

The Mason Knitting Co. have resumed operations again and are now getting settled once more in their enlarged quarters.

Playing this weekend at the Gregory Theatre, on Friday, "Silver Lining" starring Maureen O'Sullivan and on Saturday, "Vanity Street" starring Charles Bickford and Helen Chandler.

75 years ago

January 30, 1908

The Acton Tanning Co. is gradually putting the men who were laid off to work again. A number of the former workmen returned to duty on Monday.

The Robert Simpson Co. of Toronto will build their mammoth new store with Milton brick.

Hamlock bark continues to come in, in large quantities. Messrs. Beardmore and Co. have 25, or 30 men at work unloading cars at the GTR station.

Sunday's storm gave us about nine more inches of snow.

Emptying coal ashes in the centre of the streets is a violation of municipal by-laws. Officer Carnahan has been instructed to see that the practice is discontinued.

Judging from the number of drunks to be seen on the streets and coming from hotels on Sundays, the liquor laws must be being violated with considerable impunity.

100 years ago

February 8, 1883

The new town hall is now being furnished with new furniture this week.

Snow is so deep in the woods now as to materially interfere with lumbering operations.

This week scores ten uninterrupted consecutive weeks of sleighing.

It is recommended that a wood market be established in Acton, very soon.

Coles' slaw

Jacques is Jack, Jock, and none of you saints forget

Last week's column about TV, radio and a number of other things prompted this response. Perhaps it will clear up the mystery of St. Jack.

My Dear Hartley Coles Slaw,
We've been neighbours for 25 years and I never knew your last name was Slaw.

I read an account of our conversation in your newspaper column and put 2 and 2 together (that's Fahrenheit of course, it would be -18 in Celsius) indicating that you two are one and the same person.

Tell me when you have a family gathering do you call it a Slaw Festival?

Talking of names you probably did not know my middle name is Thursday. Apparently when I was born my father took a look. Then he said "I think I'll call it a day."

You see how easy it is to get names confused. So, I feel I must set you straight on your reference to St. Jack's Day.

It is "St. Jack the patron saint of Humour" we honor on the 6th of February each year, not St. Jacques. I understand he is featured on radio station QBEK. They carry question time live from the House, so I can understand the confusion.

Anyway, St. Jacques is metric and St. Jack is from Anglo-Saxon stock. He never converted. The two must never be connected for it is the British who are known for their sense of humour as you so well documented recently lamenting the lack of the same in Canada.

Now is as good a time for everyone to join in and celebrate St. Jack's Day. Make it a long weekend holiday, (as many are already doing) we heed one about this time of the year and having fun seems to be the best idea for such an occasion. There are holidays, parades, dinners, dances and parties for the other patron saints such as St. George of England, St. Andrew of Scotland, St. Patrick of Ireland, St. David of Wales, St. John of Baptiste, and St. Catharine of Niagara, not forgetting St. Preservus from the Halton Region, of course. So why not a holiday of fun for good old St. Jack.

You were certainly right about the St. Jack's Day being featured once again on "Music Hall." This year the 10th anniversary falls on the actual day Sunday the 6th. Three and a half hours of humor starting at 5.05 p.m.

The networks are presenting multi-million dollar specials, but

they are delaying starting times until later in the evening to avoid the consequence of a head-to-head broadcast schedule.

People want something to smile about these days, so have a happy St. Jack's Day. Say something funny to someone.

If St. Jack is new to you be certain it is not new according to the folk lore and legends of the southern counties of England, from which, I, like so many others have drawn my material.

A little background for your edification and appreciation:

St. Jack was born in the 11th century (1072-1142) of mixed parents. His father a Norman sailor, his mother a Saxon, the daughter of a farmer and weaver. He was born near the coastal port now known as Portsmouth in the county of Hampshire.

The family moved to the town of Winchester when he was a small boy. Here he found work in the gardens of the priory. Apparently he became an excellent gardener with natural ability which brought him work from the cathedral and the court, Winchester being the old capital of England.

However, Jack was full of mischief and practical jokes which

made him popular with the people if not with his employers who were offering him studies in return for his labor. He would have been dismissed many times if it had not been for his talent at making mead, a potent brew made from honey.

It was at the feast of St. Swithins, a Bishop of Winchester (d. 862) who was canonized, and legend has it that if it rains on his commemorative day, the 15th of July, it will rain for the next 40 days, that his mead got the better of everyone. As he was in the service of the church he became known as St. Jack and the name became popular for the sons of families in the southern counties.

He travelled to work in London and Salisbury. Old records tell of his being in the old city of Bath. Villages and hamlets still credit old stories and jokes to St. Jack although there are so many now it would have been impossible for him to have initiated all of them.

The Encyclopaedia Dictionary and the 1811 Edition of the Digest Dictionary trace the name through the ages and Jack (not John) became the name for a sailor, later to become Jack tar, a builder, a coin (farthing) and country par-

sons and parish became Jack at a pinch and Jack Adam's parish even Jesters were called Jack Pudding. Although St. Jack, as he had become known, had no children the family name Jackson came from those who were called Jack and had a son.

He is buried in a small graveyard outside of Salisbury in Wiltshire where he had retired, kept bees, made honey and mead and joked with anyone who took time to enjoy his sense of humor.

His birthday is celebrated on the 6th of February. Even today in parts of Dorset where it is most likely to snow at that time of the year they laugh about the time he turned the signpost around sending travellers to the coast instead of Bath the road being covered in snow or Jack's frost.

So, share a smile on St. Jack's. Incidentally, did you know that the post office sent ads to the newspapers with the rates... and they used courier service.

See... St. Jack still lives. Remember to smile.

Jack Carpenter, "Music Hall" 105 P.M., Sundays 5.05 to 5.30

P.S.—Anyone born in February needs a sense of humor.