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Loitering law

Two letters to the editor this week complain about overzealous police action in curbing loitering in the downtown which had been a sore spot for some merchants. One mother complains she was told to keep moving when she stopped to show her newborn baby to a friend. A youth complains he was accosted in the park and charged with loitering.

Residents are wondering what constitutes loitering and where the police draw the line.

The dictionary (Gage) defines loitering as to "linger idly"; stop and play along the way; spend (time) idly.

We would define loiterers as those who stop or restrict pedestrian traffic or business or interfere with the right of others for free and unhampered access to facilities. Casual street conversations between friends and acquaintances has always been a feature of small town life. People exchange pleasantries and information. We would not like to see that change be-

cause a few youths don't behave themselves.

The criminal code defines loitering as anyone who loiters in a public place and in any way obstructs persons who are there, for example standing on the sidewalk and refusing to leave after being asked, making people walk around them.

Halton Hills by-law 79-105, section 1, states no person shall lounge, loaf, loiter or stand as an idler in a public sidewalk, street or highway, or in a public place as defined by the criminal code so to obstruct the do and proper use thereof.

So if anyone is loitering as defined by either the criminal code or the local bylaw then they can expect action from officers but much depends on the discretion of the officer, exactly how he interprets what is happening on the streets.

An overzealous officer can strictly enforce the intent of the code, or bylaw, while an indolent policeman or woman could let loiterers get away with many infractions.

Booze and polls

Halton MP Otto Jelinek introduced a Private Members Bill in the House of Commons which, if passed, would permit the sale of alcoholic beverages while polls are open during federal elections and by-elections.

He is getting support, of course, from the Ontario Restaurant and Food Services Association (ORFA) which maintains the existing law is outdated and discriminates against businesses licensed to sell alcoholic beverages. According to the president of ORFA, the prohibition on federal election days antagonizes customers and causes loss of sales in thousands of licensed Ontario restaurants as well as loss of earnings by employees who serve and prepare alcoholic beverages.

The ORFA president rightfully points out that Ontario abolished similar

legislation some years ago without any problems.

The prohibition on the sale of alcoholic beverages goes back to times when parties of all stripes didn't hesitate to bribe voters to mark their X for their candidate with free drinks. To the thirsty, who looked ahead for election days it was a bonanza. But it led to many abuses at the polls. Public opinion forced reluctant legislators to pass a law forbidding the sale of alcohol during voting days.

Those who had the foresight to stock up ahead of time never suffered much on election day. But those who forgot to bring in their booze often found it intolerable. Bootleggers benefited while legal licensed premises were deprived of business.

If the political parties behave themselves and elections "treats" are forbidden, there really is no reason to keep the prohibition.



Our readers write

Illegal to sit in the park?

To the Editor,

On Wednesday, July 4, at 3.15 p.m. I was sitting down at the park with three friends. We weren't doing anything, just talking away a summer afternoon. We were approached by a member of the Halton police force. He then began to ask us our names, addresses and birth dates.

The first person replied, hesitantly, and I was asked next. I asked the officer why he needed this information and he told us he had some sort of complaint but he would not tell us what? I then asked him if I was under arrest, and if so, I would fully identify myself, but if not that I did not wish to. Which is, as a matter of fact, my right, guaranteed under the new constitution of Canada.

He then moved on to the other two and they told him their names because they just didn't want to get hassled for sticking up for their rights.

After he got their names he asked again (politely mind you) if I would tell him what he wanted to know. Again I refused.

Up until this time we were both being polite to each other but at that point (when I refused again) he became quite rude.

He told me, out of the four, to get moving, and if I didn't he was going to charge me for loitering in a public place, which he did when I didn't move.

All four of us were doing the exact same thing, yet I was the only one to be told to move, and then charged, because I would not

be pushed around by a police officer who got rude when someone began expressing his legal rights!

Am I to understand that it is illegal to sit down at the park on a Wednesday afternoon and chat with friends? There are no signs at the park telling me this. I thought the merchants wanted to keep people from hanging around the street! And why build a parkette down town if we can't sit at the one we have now?

I would like to mention that the park was well occupied that day and no one else was asked to identify themselves or charged for loitering.

Am I living in a free country with a charter of rights or a communist state?

Randy Turkosz

Unlawful to stop-chat?

To the Editor,

Monday morning I was on my way home from the doctors. I was pushing the buggy with my four month old baby girl inside. I spotted a friend of mine waiting for the bus in front of the former Buy Rite store on Mill St. I stopped to chat, and show off my newborn.

I was immediately approached by a Halton Regional officer who shouted from a cruiser, "If you want to talk, you have to walk and talk." My friend was told to "move on" even though she told him she was waiting for the bus.

Now I realize the need for loitering laws, but since when is it "against the law" to stop and chat?

While continuing home I was held up by two senior citizens conversing in the middle of the

sidewalk. Where was our dutiful officer then? And what of our parish priest who stops and converses with his fellow man? And how about the off duty officers chatting with friends, or the officers in uniform standing on the corner watching the traffic go by?

Now just how fine is this line? I am not a young hoodlum, but the mother of two, 32 years old, who owns her own home and pays her taxes. Am I also considered "a bum" by the 10 out of 11 merchants on Mill St.?

My regret is that in my indignation I forgot to ask his name and badge number or else it would have been added to this letter.

B. Boettiger
Acton



Back issues

10 years ago

July 17, 1954

The Ontario Government has approved the route of a 500kV hydro transmission corridor from Middleport to Pickering cutting through the centre of Halton Hills.

Funeral service was held Tuesday afternoon for John Norman Price, 26, who was tragically killed in a sudden collision on Highway 7, three miles west of Halton Rd. 3 on Saturday. John Price was riding his brother's motorcycle when the collision occurred. He would have been 27-years-old today (Wednesday).

Leslie and Mamie Kells, 114 Mill St. W. won \$100 in the fifth draw for \$150,000 in the Olympic lottery Tuesday, Charles Hubbell Jr. of Acton was the lucky winner of \$100 in the Olympic lottery last night.

20 years ago

July 18, 1944

Acton's population doubled within two hours Saturday afternoon when members of 65 lodges with 22 bands drew a huge crowd of spectators for the first five-county Orange Walk here in 40 years. Over 750 people were in the parade.

Recommendations of the centennial committee presented by Bob Drinkwater that council accept a new public library as a centennial project for the town of Acton was passed Tuesday evening.

Covering thousands of miles on his first trip to this continent, Y's Man Alan Ingold of the club at Christchurch, New Zealand, was pleased this week to meet Acton Club members and particularly Harry Arbie who showed them around the town.

50 years ago

July 19, 1914

The finding of a man's body in the rumble seat of a car that had been abandoned in Nassagaweya Township was the gruesome discovery made by James Henderson when he examined the machine on Saturday morning. The auto had been seen the day previously but nothing was thought of the incident. When the machine was still there the following morning, examination was made. The Henderson farm is about six miles south west of Acton. The victim was later identified as Frank Sighlono of Hamilton. He was an ex-convict and petty crook. To police who know him Sighlono was a "rat", unloved by those with whom he associated or by police.

Messrs R.H. Elliot, J. McGeachle, J.R. Leishman and A. Buchanan took part in the bowling tournament at Waterloo yesterday.

75 years ago

July 15, 1909

The garden party given in the park last Thursday evening by the Ladies' Aid and Epworth League of the Methodist Church was attended by about one thousand persons.

The following candidates who wrote High School entrance examinations in Acton were successful: Victor Coleman, Roy Bauer, M. Henderson, Bertia Diamond, Reta Cole, Bessie Gardner, Austin Lehman, Isabel Gilbertson, Dorothy Nelson, Luella Reed, Hubert Mann, Gertrude Harrison, Leonard Atkinson, Perry Watson, Margaret Brown, Nora Kenney, Kathleen Gibbons, Inna McPherson, James Hurd, Eva Adamson, Eleda Wilson, Pearl McDonald and John Nelson.

100 years ago

July 17, 1864

We are informed that a new project is mooted for erection of a roller mill in Acton. The projectors are strangers. If any reasonable inducement can be offered to secure a roller mill in Acton by all means let council do their duty to the municipality for that matter.

On Saturday night a couple of burglaries were committed in Acton but happily the contemptible house breakers secured very little "swag". They entered the residence of Mr. A.W. Green at the corner of Mill and Wilbur Streets, and the post office.

We are informed that more drunkenness was to be seen on the streets of Rockwood Saturday than has been in Acton during the past two years. Of course this was not Rockwood's fault, but the fault of the licence system which prevails in that county.

We understood that Mrs. Josiah Adams intends continuing business in the stand now occupied by Mr. W.C. King.

Coles' slaw

No wonder they devised a curfew for kids

Halton Police have served notice they are going to clamp down on the 10 p.m. curfew established last fall for those under 18 years of age. I can already hear the cries of anguish from the kids and sighs of relief from parents who can tell their kids to stay home or the police will get them.

As I have mentioned in these columns before, curfews are not something new to Acton. Back in the days when this scribbler attended school they rang the darn thing from the old town hall at nine o'clock, not 10. We had to be off the streets or accompanied by an adult—or else. The Acton police then consisted of one chief and a night constable. The chief was E.E. Harrop.

Fortunately, Mr. Harrop's car had squeaky brakes, not unlike my '63 model, and we could hear him coming after the curfew rang. We usually lit out for home when we heard the brakes, not the bell. If we were accosted it was not uncommon to lie outright and tell the chief we hadn't heard the bell.

He, of course, knew we were lying, or equivocating if you want a softer word. He would tell us to get off the street or he would report us to our parents who probably thought we were out weeding the garden or helping some elderly

lady across the street anyway. But it was enough to scare us into evacuating our street games such as Oyster Sails, Kick the Can and Spin the Bottle. And other harmless pursuits.

Spin the Bottle meant that you were playing with girls. Parents always thought that if you were with them you would never get into any trouble. I think it must have been girls who devised the game because they spun the bottle, any old bottle you could find. The one who spun had to kiss the one at whom the neck pointed, providing it was someone of the opposite sex.

Well, there was always someone in the group who was choosy about whom they would kiss. If the bottle didn't point in the right direction they'd say it was pointing in between—and they'd give 'er another spin.

Kissing a girl was the last thing most of us boys would do under ordinary circumstances. But once Spin the Bottle started you were licked. No one would taunt you the next day because they knew even if you did take an extra moment kissing someone you liked, it was all under the protective umbrella of The Game.

That is, all except sisters. If they participated in the games and all was quiet at the dinner table the



by Hartley Coles
Managing Editor

next day, as sure as one follows two, they would blurt out, "I saw Jim kissing Joan yesterday and he hadn't even washed his face."

Naturally, under the gaze of the whole family who fixed their gaze on you with obvious delight in the torture, you turned a brilliant red, notifying everyone you were guilty. Usually parents would just pass the whole incident off but your pipsqueak brother who always tagged along, would add some postscript such as, Yeah, and he kissed Jessie... too.

By then not only your face was burning red with embarrassment. You could feel your whole body burning, too. The urge to escape

was paramount. It called for a good choking act on your spinach, then a hurried retreat to the bathroom, which consisted of a privy at the end of the back yard. There you could plan revenge on your brother and sister.

The remembrance of the acute embarrassment you suffered had passed by the next day and you could happily trudge out wild strawberry or raspberry picking the next day. Usually every kid on the block went to pick wild berries which used to grow on every sunny hillside in profusion and along railway routes especially. We took cans and six quart baskets and brought the sweet berries home to eat. That is those we hadn't already consumed on the way home.

Wild strawberries took a lot of picking. Placed beside the pick-your-own produce people pick now, they were pygmies. It took an awful lot of them to fill a can and almost a day's picking to fill a six quart basket. At least it seemed like a day. It was probably only a few hours.

Then there were raspberries where you could stand up to pick and the ladies and girls were always on the lookout for snakes, imagined and real. If any snake saw them dressed in their brother's overalls and a bandana