

**Beardmore worker fled troubled land in 1972**

**Government inaction also to blame in Ethiopia, native contends**

By MARK HOLMES  
 Eretrai, Ethiopia, is a place where the words "barren" and "desolate" describe both the land and the future of the people that live there.  
 Eretrai is one of the Ethiopian areas that suffers in climatic and political crosswinds that erode the soil and ultimately the lives of millions of people.  
 From one direction, parched air blows over the land, robbing the soil of water and causing a devastating drought. From another direction, political winds cut off possible aid and hope of release from unimaginable suffering.  
 This is not the first time severe drought has brought famine to Ethiopia and it is not the first time a cruel and corrupt government has failed to administer the problem, according to a former resident of the strife-torn country, Haigaz Assadourian of Acton.  
 Haigaz, or Haig, as his friends call him, left Ethiopia reluctantly ten years ago amid a storm of political unrest and economic upheaval.  
 Since leaving, he has married, become a Canadian resident, found a comfortable, secure job with Beardmore Tannery and is raising a family, but his hopes and fears for the country of his birth haven't diminished in his absence.  
 Haig was born in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, and grew up under the rule of

Haile Selassie, a man considered by many of his people to be a god as well as their Emperor.  
 Selassie, who enjoyed almost total rule in Ethiopia, insisted on developing his country by educating his people. He founded Selassie University, an institution which eventually turned into a hotbed of political opposition. The opposition suggested Haig, was a result of extremely high unemployment.  
 University graduates who couldn't find jobs were a perfect tool to be used by foreign influences. Agitated and looking for some way to resolve the country's economic woes, many Ethiopians began to follow Marxist doctrine.  
 For a time, the movement gathered momentum and then, in the wake of the disastrous 1972 drought, Selassie was deposed.  
 Haig remembers well the sound of gunfire that echoed through the streets and the fear that came with the disappearance of friends and well-known political adversaries.  
 "I didn't feel safe in Ethiopia," said Haig, "and I believed that staying there held no future for me."  
 Haig was lucky. He'd planned to attend a London university to further his studies in the tanning trade.  
 A year after arriving in England, Haig was offered a job in Acton.  
 Despite being thousands of miles from

Ethiopia, Haig continued watched and listened to the rumblings coming from his native country. His experiences and his concern mark his illuminating and timely comments on the situation Ethiopia and her people face today.  
 "The government in Ethiopia won't admit they have a problem because it isn't to their advantage," Haig said, stressing his pride in his African heritage first and in his Canadian citizenship second.  
 "The area in which the starvation is, is also an area where much of the government's opposition comes from. The people there are independent and wish to remain so, much to the government's disapproval," he explained.  
 Ethiopia isn't the poor Third World country many people imagine it to be, Haig claimed. In fact, there are several areas, including a place called Forty Springs, that are rich agriculturally.  
 These areas could easily grow enough food to support Ethiopia's population and even export some products, Haig said.  
 It's mismanagement and a total lack of desire, on the part of the government, that has added to the desperate situation, Haig said.  
 "Take, for instance, how the government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on lavish banquets and whiskey while millions of people starve," said Haig sadly.

"It shows just where the government's priorities are."  
 Haig referred to a time ten years ago when another drought was plaguing the country. Americans, Canadians and many others sent millions of dollars worth of food and goods to Ethiopia, he said. Those goods never reached the people who needed them. They were repacked and exported to other countries, including the places they came from, for cash so top officials could sit around their swimming pools, he said.  
 The starvation isn't something recent in Ethiopia either, Haig said. It's been around for a long time and only now are the television crews and reporters going into the area.  
 Haig praised Canadians and Americans for their generosity to the people of Ethiopia, but said he wouldn't personally give support to most of the agencies sending aid.  
 If the aid is channelled through the government, like most is, then it will never get to the people, he emphasized. If a country is going to provide help, they have to take it directly to the people or to the agencies that are set up in the trouble spots.  
 The British, claimed Haig, have the best system he has seen so far.  
 "They have missionaries and foreign aid groups set up right there and the government has very little say over where or how, the aid gets to the people."



Haigaz Assadourian, a native of Ethiopia, left his homeland in the midst of political unrest more than a decade ago. In the wake of the devastating famine that is plaguing Ethiopia, the Acton resident has some illuminating comments on the situation.

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One Hundred and Tenth Year - Issue 18

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**THAT TIME OF YEAR**

'Tis the season.' Lola Price decorates a Christmas tree at Trinity United Church's bazaar Saturday. Theme of the bazaar was an Old-Fashioned Christmas, in keeping with the church's bicentennial.

**Main sidewalks to be snow-free as private plows line up for winter**

Concerned that pedestrians' lives may be in danger, the Town's general committee has sanctioned the first increase in years in the level of service it provides to improve sidewalk snow clearing this winter.  
 Warning that the public still can't expect to see walks cleared first thing in the morning after a snowstorm, Town engineer Bob Austin will invite private snowplow operators to submit bids on clearing designated neighborhoods.  
 The Town has neither the manpower nor equipment to provide the level of service councillors are hoping for, Austin commented Monday night as the committee established sidewalk clearing priorities.

But trying to meet public demand for a higher level of snow clearing service requires a "blank check," Councillor Dave Whiting complained, noting that many western Canada centres no longer plow roads, let alone sidewalks, because of their financial situation.  
 Chairing Monday's meeting, Whiting didn't hesitate to cast the tying—and thus the defeating—vote against attempts by councillors to add new sidewalks to the priority list before them.  
 Whiting's action effectively stopped Mayor Russ Miller from having Elizabeth Dr. walks in front of the seniors' residence cleared this winter and blocked similar

efforts by Councillors Peter Norton and Marylyn Serjeantson.  
 The committee narrowly endorsed Councillor Finn Poustrup's motion to tender out sidewalk clearing to private operators based on available time and equipment.  
 "Three or four days after a storm is too late," Poustrup said. "We're inviting injury. Time is of the essence here."  
 "It has been council's policy over the last few years not to increase our levels of service, but to maintain them," Councillor Harry Levy pointed out. "We're already 200 per cent over budget for 1984 snow clearing and yet what we're talking about here represents literally thousands and thousands of dollars. And remember, after we start doing these sidewalks, we're going to have a heck of a job withdrawing them."  
 Councillor John McDonald called the new expenditures "money well spent" and noted the Town had "four very close calls" at one Georgetown location last winter.  
 "We cannot afford it," Councillor Mike Armstrong argued. "We haven't any idea where the extra money is coming from. We get a lot of complaints after the first snowstorm, but after that, people tend to adjust themselves."  
 Halton Hills "owes it" to the public to spend more money on sidewalk clearing, Miller said.  
 "We're putting their lives in danger," he said, by leaving snow on busy sidewalks and thus forcing pedestrians to walk along the side of the traffic lanes.  
 In a report, Austin suggested that council's desired level of service demands almost simultaneous road and sidewalk clearing, whereas the Town currently has crews clear all major roads, then gradually work on walks.  
 Noting that the Acton Business Improvement Area has in the past hired its own private snowplows, Austin estimated that the Town would spend \$1,800 a year to clear the designated Acton walks, based on 16 separate clearings through the winter.  
 Private plows would be contracted to clear walks in a designated neighborhood, Austin explained, so that no one operator would run up unnecessary costs in travelling from one area to another.

**Take a snow-free saunter**

Following is the order in which Acton sidewalks will be cleared of snow this winter. The priorities were approved by the Town's general committee Monday night and are expected to be ratified by council next week:

1. MILL STREET, north side, Cob-Mehill to Young
2. MILL STREET, south side, Main to Eastern
3. MAIN STREET, west side, Kingham to Guelph St.
4. MAIN STREET, east side, Church St. to School Lane
5. ACTON BLVD., east side, M.Z. Bennett School to Queen
6. YOUNG STREET, Mill to Queen
7. QUEEN STREET, Young to Churchill

**Homeowners off the hook No bylaw foreseen on sidewalk shovelling**

There will be no bylaw making residents shovel the snow from sidewalks in front of their homes.  
 Monday night, Halton Hills council decided any such bylaw would be unenforceable, unless additional staff is hired.  
 A request for the bylaw came from the Georgetown Postmaster, claiming snowy sidewalks made delivering the mail difficult for mailmen.

Town Engineer Bob Austin reported few municipalities have such a bylaw and fewer still find it practical to enforce them.  
 He noted there must be a provision where the Town would do the work after 24 hours notice and the homeowner would pay. He doubted if the present works crew had the time to do the additional work.  
 Council voted unanimously to forget about such a bylaw.

**'Chicken Little's' fears resolved Region assured about Pomeroy**

With grace under pressure, Pete Pomeroy successfully defended his dual political role as Regional chairman and Provincial election candidate last week, earning a strong show of support from from councillors.  
 A motion to proceed no further with Burlington Councillor Joan Little's request for a full accounting by the chairman received virtually unanimous support last Wednesday after Pomeroy yielded his gavel to verbally answer a number of concerns. If other commitments prove too demanding, he said, he will resign the chairman's job.  
 Council's administration and finance committee had asked for a full report on Pomeroy's intentions as Regional chairman once the next Provincial election is called. Little wanted to know how much time Pomeroy, as Progressive Conservative candidate in Halton-Burlington, will be able to give Regional Affairs while campaigning for a seat at Queen's Park.

"I don't want anyone to leave here with the thought that I didn't welcome Councillor Little's request," Pomeroy said.  
 Discussion on the matter was tense, but restrained, and generally amiable, Pomeroy only once confronting Little directly. He likened the situation to the children's story about Chicken Little, who was struck on the head by a falling object and concluded that the sky was falling.  
 "Well, Councillor Little, the sky is not falling," Pomeroy said, shouldering aside speculation about "hypothetical situations."  
 "My commitment is to full-time Regional chairmanship. I certainly hope we can put this issue away today."  
 Recalling that she'd asked Pomeroy whether he would seek Provincial or Federal office during the three-year chairman's term if an election was called at either level—and received a commitment

Continued on page A2

**Santa's parade route changes**

**Better not good enough**

This year's Santa Claus parade, a week from this Saturday, will be bigger and better than it has been in years, but that's still not good enough for the organizing Acton Firefighters.  
 They want more.  
 There are already more than 20 floats under construction, according to Phil McCristall, meaning Santa fans will see a longer and more entertaining parade, but if you're not already building one, you're urged to get started.  
 More floats will be welcome to line up alongside the perennial favorites on Churchill Rd. North, the new starting point. The floats, bands, Scout and Guide troops, Air Cadets, clowns and St. Nick and company in horse-drawn sleigh will proceed onto Acton Blvd. via Macdonald, out to the highway, and into the downtown core.  
 In another new development, the parade will march along Main to River St., then past the library and the Free Press building, breaking up on Bower Ave.  
 Sound appealing? Don't just stand on the curb and watch this year, write McCristall at 27 Nelson Court, Acton, L7J 1A3, with your float plans, indicating whether it will be of the commercial, school, service club or some other variety.  
 Santa's just around the corner, so don't waste time.

**VIA can help boost tourism here - clerk**

Acton's potential as a tourism centre could be the selling point needed to convince reluctant VIA Rail officials to reinstate service here.  
 Town councillors Monday night ignored Halton MP Otto Jelinek's promises about returning VIA to Acton while considering a progress report on negotiations between the company and a committee of interested Actonians.  
 General Committee voted to continue lobbying VIA and the Canadian Transport Commission (CTC) for better service and to investigate the possibility of using existing VIA service to improve Acton's tourism potential. Jelinek will be asked to help.  
 Although the MP told the Free Press shortly after his re-election this fall that VIA would again stop in Acton starting late this year or early in 1985, VIA officials have been less than encouraging in discussions with Town and community leaders.  
 After two meetings this year with a committee including Mayor Russ Miller, Town clerk-administrator Ken Richardson,



**NOT FORGOTTEN**  
 A Lorne Scots militiaman stands at attention at the Mill St. cenotaph during Sunday's Remembrance Day observations. Photos from the Rockwood service on page A2, more from Acton on page A5.

Continued on page A3