

OPINIONS OF OTHERS

Norval School . . .

The fight to save Norval public school is a cause celebre in an era when citizens are finding that sometimes it is possible to fight city hall — and win.

As we see in our community more and more citizens are less willing to sit back and let somebody in authority dictate their lives and ruin their community. Thus we have the citizen protest over Rebecca widening, Six towers, Wuthering Heights, White Oaks traffic routes, hi-rise development and urban decay.

Now comes Norval school, and it is an exercise in citizen power that ought not to be overlooked. It is a heartening example of ordinary people determined to protect their life-style, even if it means challenging the Halton education board's administrative power-house.

The administration has proposed that Norval's rural school should be closed. And it paraded out a lot of facts and figures designed to convince Halton education trustees the school is not justified. But Norval parents remained unconvinced.

The parents did not simply voice protest, as most people do when they feel offended by political authority. They organized themselves, then set out to prove with facts and figures that their school should remain open.

After the spade work was completed and individual assignments compiled, the Norval parents put their case before the education board. It was an overwhelming display of the power of citizens to protect their interests.

Ratepayer spokesman Peter Hughes coordinated the defence of Norval school when the case came before trustees, and his back-up support was excellent. First one parent gave a comprehensive report which showed that rather than being "undesirable" the Norval school sewage system "is working remarkably well." Then another parent presented a report which challenged the administration's claim that Norval school property is smaller than minimum state at 4.5 acres. This parent's report revealed the property can be expanded and is not "landlocked"; he pointed out that "there are no rulings laid down by any higher authority with regard to land requirements for public schools. The choice of a minimum size has been made entirely on the authority of the Halton county board," and he showed that by comparison the Norval school grounds at 4.5 acres exceed rather than fall short of space requirements, especially when compared to urban schoolyards sandwiched into crowded residential areas.

There were other briefs on the quality of education at Norval school: "In summary, it is our belief that quality of education being offered in Norval public school is not only equal to but superior in many important ways to that offered in most larger schools. Over the years the staff and students have overcome any problems created by small facilities with their ingenuity and co-operation. This school is an excellent example of and has been the reason for the excellent community spirit of Norval, and we believe that the important social aspects of education which these students are obtaining in Norval public school cannot be obtained in any large school."

There was a detailed home-to-home survey showing citizen support for the school and why people give their support. Finally there was an eloquent lecture by Norval resident Julian Reed on "the right and responsibility of parents to educate their children."

Here is part of what he said: "In Canada, for the first time in our history, we are becoming aware of our identity as a nation, separate from our wealthier and more numerous neighbours to the south, not so much by geography as by philosophy. We are taking our independent place among the nations of the world with attitudes and ideas all our own. Ours is the first generation in this country to do so. We recognize that if we are to survive as a nation, our children will have to be even more aware of their identity than ever. Identity, like charity, begins at home. We cherish the opportunity our children have at present to live and work in their own community. We value an environment where they can assimilate their own heritage at an age when it will remain with them for the rest of their lives. We value the time spent pulling a toboggan up a hill or swimming or playing ball or anything else (for that matter) instead of riding a school bus. We value the sense of belonging our children learn at a very early age, the early appreciation they learn for THEIR school and THEIR community. These values are unique to a small community and cannot be duplicated in any other environment, hence the recognition of these facts in our Statement of Purpose which indicates as a matter of course that our children be educated in their 'home community.'

Thus the case for Norval school was presented in a manner which left education board chairman Douglas Wood with no alternative but to promise the matter will be completely reviewed. For the Norval parents it was homework, not simply protest, that paid off. It's a lesson for all citizen groups dealing with city hall.

Nobody really thinks schools are tax-supported baby-sitters, but many parents seem to regard them as such nowadays. So it's refreshing to know that a group of Norval parents care enough to be disturbed that the Halton County School Board wants to close their rural school.

Were they of a different bent, Norval parents might even appreciate the extra hour or two their children would be out of their hair riding buses to and from school.

These Norval parents are concerned about their children's education and believe it can best be done at Norval School. There's strong evidence to support that position, and they have taken the effort to gather it in building their defence of Norval School.

Parents are ultimately responsible for the education of their children. That is an obligation many have sloughed off onto "experts," thus blaming their consciences and unburdening their minds.

But as they are responsible for their children's education, they have also the right to exercise control over education.

"Indeed," says Julian Reed, one of the Norval parents, "we find in our democratic structure that responsibility in all matters is ultimately left up to the individual."

Ho adds "The acceptance of this responsibility had been taken no more seriously than in the Village of Norval and its surrounding area. Since earliest times the interests of this school have been largely attended to by concerned parents who have taken an active, volunteer part in its operation. At the present time many hours are given each year, willingly and with a sense of dedication."

If the school board closes Norval School, the loss won't be just to Norval students and parents.

Sure, that community will suffer the loss of the little school it cherishes — one that's been there for 118 years.

And the children will suffer through tedious bus rides and loss of group identity as they are blended into bigger, though not necessarily better, institutions.

But the biggest loss to Halton County citizens would be that of the right to be individual in the eyes of government. Individuality need not be personal; groups are unique also; Norval citizens are asking for individual consideration of them as a group.

Then there is the right not to have individual needs incautiously diluted by a government body's philosophy of what is best for most. Norval School, for example, ought to exist because Norval citizens want it to, not because the school board finds it simpler to bus students other places.

Julian Reed said quite accurately, "There has been an increasing tendency of recent years for agencies of government to tend to act in the best interests of the people rather than as the people direct. This practice, while expedient, is dangerous."

When a government body ignores the fact that its region is composed of segments and rules as though all were uniform, some segments get shabby treatment.

"We believe," said Reed, "that school boards, being given their authority by the people, are in fact, an extension of the people and as such are responsible to them and must at all times be prepared to act in their behalf."

Too often the largest or most influential faction imposes its will on everyone else. And that, of course, is why many people resisted a regional school board in the first place.

However, there is nothing absolute in that reasoning and the school board ought to quickly quell people's worries.

Board decisions should be based on the wishes of those most directly affected as well as the general good, in the case of Norval school any benefits from its closing are marginal at best.

Norval residents are the people most affected and they have spoken overwhelmingly in favor of retaining their school.

So should the school board.

Working Women

Things you probably didn't know about women in the labour force.

- 38 percent of Ontario's women work for pay outside the home.
- The average working woman is 37 years of age. Nearly a third are over the age of 45.
- 63 percent of Ontario's working women are married.
- Just 10 percent are widowed, separated or divorced.
- In 1951 only one married woman in seven was working. Today one in three are working.
- About one quarter of Ontario's mothers are working, and about half of them have children under six years of age.
- 42.8 percent of the women working in Ontario are in clerical work, and 21.4 percent are in service and recreation work. Just 1.4 percent are labourers and unskilled.

IN THE MAIL BAG

Stewarttown

Proposes Fund for Family of Boat Race Drowning Victim

To whom may be concerned:

As a participant in the 'Crazy Boat Race' picture number 2 in The Herald this (last) week. (by the way the name was Kris-Is Kraft, not Kris Is Krafty, a supposed pun against Kris Kraft boats) with a thought to the Credit River Conservation Authority's pamphlet "Crisis on the Credit."

You can bet that every minute in those 'Crazy Boats' on that river is a crisis, no matter how you spell it.

I would like to bring the attention of the sponsors of this most interesting and enjoyable contest to another similar meeting held on the Beaver River this year. Unfortunately one man was drowned, 42 years old, 10 years younger than I, and no doubt also with family responsibilities.

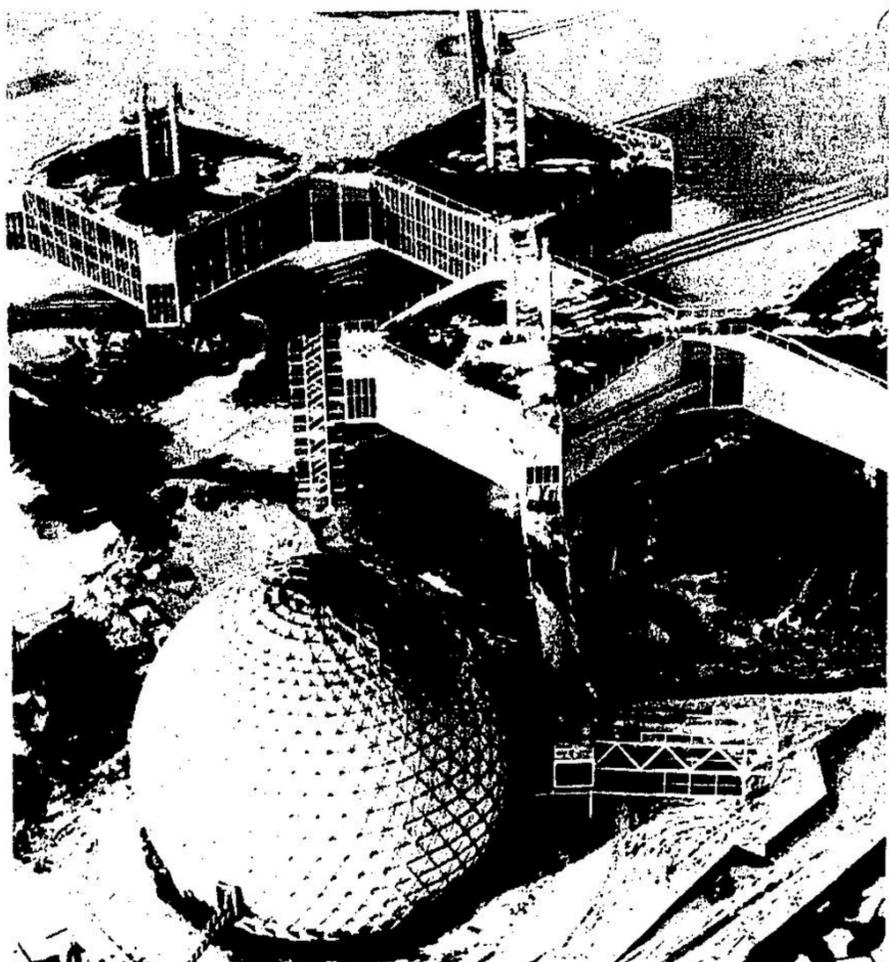
In no way am I suggesting that this 'Crazy Boat Race' be discontinued either on the Credit or its counterpart on the Beaver River.

I simply suggest that since there are mutual interests involved, the sponsors of the Crazy Boat Race should promote a fund raising to help the family of this unfortunate man who drowned on the Beaver River.

And though the sponsors have given considerable thought and effort to safety, on the Crazy Boat Race a serious accident is quite possible here also. Such a fund could also be designed to help those who may suffer from a similar accident in the future.

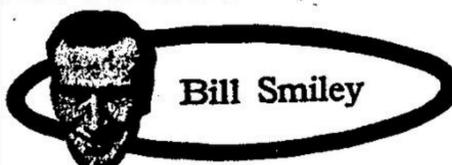
I hope this enclosed donation will be accepted by the sponsors as a starter for such a fund.

Yours truly,
W. W. Edie



ONTARIO'S PLACE TO STAND, SIT, WALK AND ENJOY

Helicopter view of winter at Ontario Place. In the foreground is 800-seat domed cinesphere, 90 feet high, 110 feet in diameter. Background shows four of five Ontario Place Pavilion pods. Four will house colorful mixed-media exhibits, the fifth, restaurant and banquet facilities. The 96-acre complex, in Lake Ontario, south of the Canadian National Exhibition grounds, Toronto, will open May 22.



Bill Smiley

How Smiley Dealt With Officer Types

Last year I had a rare chance to do something I've always wanted to do, and I seized it with both hands and my tongue.

I was speaking to the Vimy Branch, Royal Canadian Legion, at its annual observance of the battle for Vimy Ridge. The Vimy branch is unique in that nearly all its members are ex-officers of the Canadian armed forces.

On the program for the banquet was printed a list of the executive and the past presidents. It contained a bounty of Brigadiers, a confusion of Colonels, a mess of Majors, a wedge of Wing Commanders and a scattering of Squadron Leaders. Senior officers. Sitting ducks.

Ever since my days as a fledgling fighter pilot, I've enjoyed a firm conviction that there is no possible way anyone can pound anything into the head of a senior officer.

Here was a golden opportunity to prove my theory, and I sailed into it with gusto. I didn't use a phoney survey or a lot of statistical facts, but personal experience, and let them have it with both barrels.

As a flying student, I first ran into the obtuseness of the senior officer. This wing commander, the chief flying instructor, nearly had a stroke because I'd tried to land from

one end of the runway while another student was trying to land from the other. How was I to know the wind had changed 180 degrees since I'd taken off?

During advanced flying training in England, a similar occurrence deepened my conviction. I was coming in to land, every sense alert and my mind dallying with a 72-hour pass and a chubby Land Army girl. Some fool down on the runway started firing red flares.

I went around again, and again he did it. I had checked the windsock carefully this time, so knew it was his fault, not mine. On my fourth approach, I did the usual cockpit check and no red flares went up.

I rolled to a stop and the squadron leader was standing in his jeep, his face a sort of mulberry shade. And once again the insensibility of senior officers was displayed. Not only did he call me a stupid clot who should be sent back to Canada in a straight jacket, but the dirty dog cancelled my weekend pass. And all because I'd forgotten one little item on my first three approaches: putting my wheels down.

Then there was my squadron commander in France. I was his No. 2 and we'd made a dive bombing attack, firing our cannon as we dived, which was our worst, not to hit anything, but to bolster our nerves. He shouted something on the way down, but I thought it was something silly like, "Hammer the Hun", so paid no attention, closed my eyes as was my wont, and squeezed the tiller.

When we landed, he was in a terrible flap because I was the only one who had dropped his bombs — on the wrong side of the bomb line.

I thought it was damn poor navigation on his part. I think what really bothered him was that I'd shot off a bit of his wing on the way down.

Then there was the ridiculous squadron leader in flying control who made me land with a hang-up. In those days a hang-up was not some trivial emotional disturbance. It was a fused bomb, dangling by its tail from your wing.

I tried to get rid of it over the sea. Nothing worked. Hopefully, I suggested, "Shall I bail out?" His reply: "Don't be silly. We need that aircraft." Pilots were cheap, aircraft expensive.

One bounce on landing and it would be meat, me, all over the landscape. And I was always known as Two-Bounce Smiley. Did you ever see a mouse with kid gloves on, walking on egg shells? That's the way I landed. But what hurt was that he wouldn't let me land on the metal air strip, as he didn't want it torn up when I blew up. I had to land on the bumpy verge beside the strip.

Just a few of the examples I gave to the senior officers in my audience of the bone-headedness of senior officers. They took it well, because, of course, they didn't understand. I offered to step into the alley, afterwards, with any senior officer. Provided he was over 50. Two ancient brigadiers had to be forcibly restrained.

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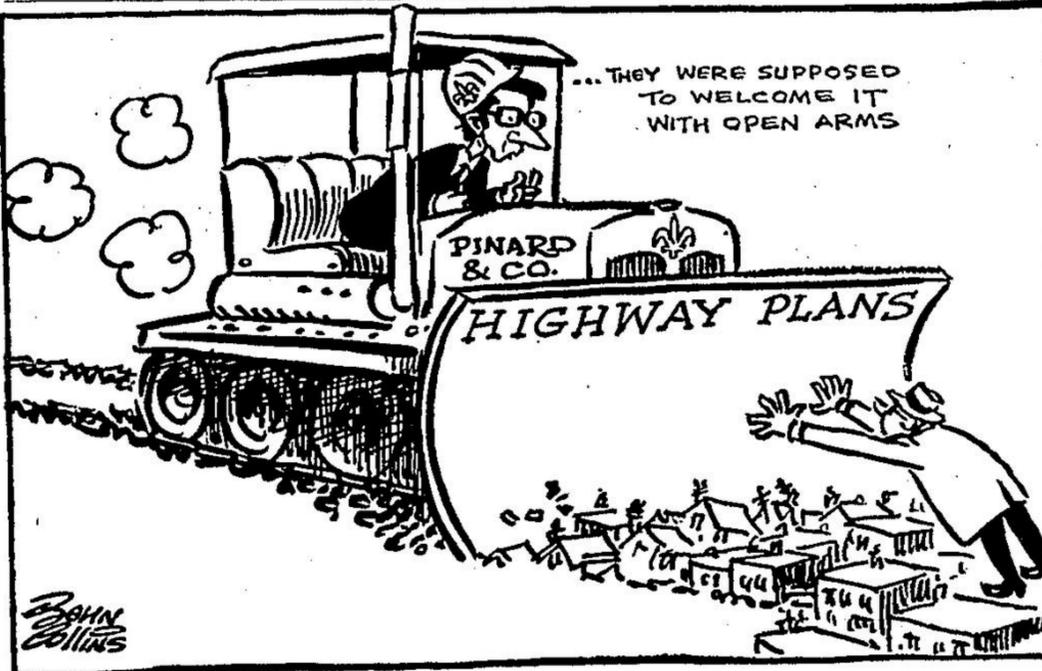
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TALKING BACK TO THE BULLDOZER