

Who will really benefit from a closed door policy?

We cannot agree with the recommendation by the general administration committee that closing all committee meetings to the public "will be better for everyone."

In voicing our objections we're doing so not from the point of view of the press.

That's important for councillors to realize and it's something we hope they'll also consider when they sit down to study the general administration committee's suggestion.

Our objections are stated as members of the public.

There is no way that closing the door on council's decision-making process (and committee meetings are where easily three-quarters of council's decisions are made) is to our—the public's—benefit.

Taking such a step councillors will only create a great deal of misunderstanding and mistrust among the public towards council's decisions.

All of the reasons presented by the general administration committee to support their decision were based solely on their own point of view.

They felt that they had been misquoted or misrepresented by the members of the press in reports of committee meetings.

If that is true then any councillor—as can any citizen—may confront the editor and reporter involved with an objection. We will apologize for any mistake or error.

The general administration committee felt that they would be able to discuss things more freely if the public is not there.

That freedom, if they are not already well aware, is already there, thanks to in camera sessions and frequent asides that the press are asked not to report.

The general administration committee objected to having to read about the decisions of other council committees at the same time as the public. They recalled being questioned about decisions made by committees other than their own before they could either get in touch with a councillor involved or receive the facts in their complete bundle of committee reports which they receive Fridays.

We can sympathize with them. It must be embarrassing to be asked a question by someone who expects you to have all the facts and figures at your fingertips when you don't know.

But is that really reason enough to warrant changing the entire system to cut out the public from knowing anything?

Is that what you are striving for? No embarrassing questions from

public? No telephone calls? No comments?

Which brings us to the crux of the entire debate. When do you allow the public to express their concerns on a situation? Before or after council has approved?

An informed public is a responsive public. That response may be critical; it may be extremely helpful for a councillor. A councillor must be willing to listen to all of it.

To hinder, if not totally destroy, communications between the public and council will place our councillors in a dangerous vacuum.

The public will be placed in a position where they will only be able to react, but never aid in council's decision-making process.

It's with some relief that we realize that the very process that the general administration committee is attempting to destroy presently exists and perhaps will be able to help in its own survival.

Councillors now have a week to weigh the full implications of any decision to change the present committee-council system. We, the public, have an opportunity to express our personal points of view.

Our personal point of view speaking now as members of the press—should be to point out to councillors and our readers that space and time limitations will make it impossible for our paper to provide complete coverage of town council meetings.

At present we can spread committee recommendations between two issues. To have to, somehow, find space in one edition for all that is impossible. It's difficult to do so now; any change would make it impossible.

Time limitations would force cutting corners in providing details behind the stories that occur at council.

True, we would have committee reports available from which we could get basic details for our stories. We would not, however, have the time to question councillors or staff about the reasoning of committees behind each and every decision.

A good seventy-five percent of committee reports are adopted by council without comment or explanation.

The questions that the public would be asking due to incomplete stories will become serious problems for councillors.

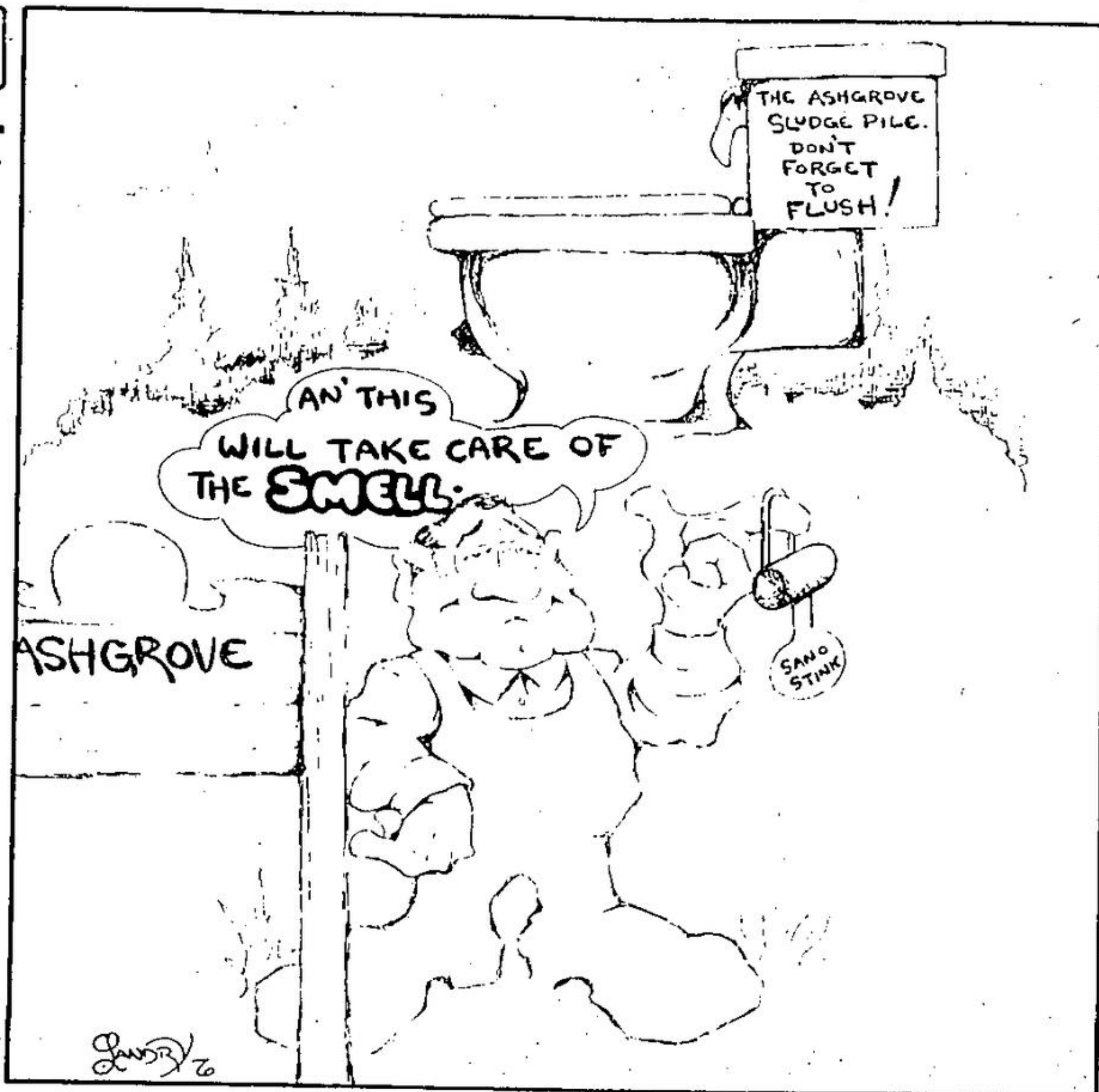
We can only conclude by asking all councillors to weigh the public's right to know against their personal beefs with the press. Which is more important in our democratic system of government?

members who dominate the conversation, three who join in occasionally and the remainder who remain silent throughout the entire meeting.

If a person is totally committed to the goals and principles of conservation, having an opportunity to act on them should be reward enough.

That perhaps is what galled us most about last week's meeting. The only action that some members took through the entire meeting, besides heading for the coffee pot, was to stand up and vote themselves the \$2 raise when the recorded vote was called.

We know people who are practising conservation along the Credit whose concern for the environment is costing them money.



Viewpoint

This typewriter talks back

by Gerry Landsborough
This week Viewpoint offers its readers a new regular featured called, coincidentally "What's New". What's new will comment on some of the latest developments in the world at large. Some will be close to home, some a lifetime away.

We cannot go backwards in time—progress is always the path ahead, one of forward motion. Not all change is undesirable and "What's New" will look at the changes and developments around us—both for the good and the bad. We hope you will enjoy our new feature and if you would like to comment or contribute we always enjoy hearing from you.

Recently at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind a young student tried out a prototype of a \$3,000 "talking typewriter."

This machine was developed by Dr. Ching Y. Suen and Dr. Michael Beddoes. The new machine combines the science of computer programming and a regular typewriter.

When the "a" key is pressed an electronic voice heard through earphones says "a". The same follows with each of the other letters of the alphabet and the figures on a typewriter. This marvellous talking typewriter, will not only allow a blind student to become proficient in typing but open up many other new areas such as creative writing, completing university theses, etc. The machine even has an error button which, when pressed, automatically corrects any mistake and also checks if a mistake has been made. Dr. Suen is also developing a "talking reading machine" that will scan newspapers, books or magazines for the blind and they will be able to hear what the machine is reading.

The same technology that ushered in all the horrors of nuclear holocaust is developing

such miraculous modern miracles. Such machines will allow a fuller life for those who have been denied, through tragedy or birth, the ability to see.

Here is a real believe it or not for you. Marine biologists in Halifax have developed a method of blinding young lobsters by removing their eyes. These experiments have shown that a lobster that has been blinded matures for eating in about one year as opposed to a normal, seven-year wait for maturity. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has strongly protested this practise. However they had never made an attempt at dropping lobsters alive into pots of boiling water—this doesn't seem to bother them.

Pardon me, but I really can't see any difference between the two. If you feel that blinding young lobsters to make them grow faster is any different than force-feeding chickens or raising cows for slaughter, let me know. At any rate even though the marine biologists in question have discovered this process by experimentation they can't tell us why it works; why a blind lobster grows faster than one that sees? Do you think the fact that it doesn't have to look at what it's been eating has anything to do with it?

Everything in life appears to have its extreme or opposite. For beauty there is ugliness, for love there is hate, for life, death.

For the wonderful drug codeine that saves man from mind-bending pain the poppy also produces opium, heroin and morphine. Though these drugs are also beneficial in a medical situation their abuse has brought terrible agonizing death to those who would abuse them and play a fool's game.

Israeli scientists have developed a "white poppy" that would not produce anything but codeine. The US government, in

order to cut down on the import of narcotics for criminal purposes, has subsidized Turkish red poppy growers not to plant their crops.

The development of the "White Poppy" by science will not eliminate illicit drug use but ear, and does offer a viable alternative.

Our last item for this week is a dial-a-service from Toronto. By calling 259-7272 you will hear a recorded message of a "positive thought for the day." I find the message and the idea behind it positively delightful. What a wonderful way to start a day if you're down and out. No slippy religious message here, just good old plain commonsense, with the positive approach. Just for fun give it a try.

On Parliament Hill

Is this any way to run a government?

By Stewart MacLeod
Ottawa Bureau
Of The Herald

OTTAWA—When teachers take their students to the House of Commons to witness Canada's lawmakers in action, it's a bit like Russian roulette. There is only about one chance in six that there will be real action.

Children frequently spend all day in a bus just to sit through 30 minutes of dreary debate on some insignificant issue. And unless they are lucky enough to be in the House for the daily-question period, they are not likely to see the party leaders or other political stars.

The worst debates are usually those associated with private member's bills—even the government doesn't appear particularly interested. Spectators seldom hang around very long.

So the teacher who brought her class into the Commons while MPs debated a private bill that would establish a new chartered bank must have been delighted to hear it was to be an educational experience. John Rodriguez NDP-Nickel Belt was explaining that when it comes to showing the relationship between Canada's financial and political systems, "no course in any school or business administration could be more effective in showing that relationship than simply coming to this place" for the debate then under way.

Great Day

Obviously it should have been a good day for any visiting students. They could settle down and learn all about intertwined directorships, political relationships, with

On The Home Front

Life is so good

by Susan De Facendis
I freely admit that life has been good to me. Beautiful things happen without any real conscious effort on my part and, consequently there are times when I am forced to stop and wonder not only why, but to give thanks.

Frequently, while shopping, visiting the library, or out on any one of the myriad chores a woman is expected to perform, I look at the faces of people around me. So many of them appear worried, tense or angry and I find this rather sad.

It is always easy to fasten our minds on problems, to look at the bad times as though they are here permanently. Maybe, though, Easter is a time when we should reflect upon the many blessings we really have.

Too often good-health love or a family are taken for granted and abused.

While Christmas can represent a time of love and giving, Easter is spring. Spring is the visible promise of re-birth, of life after death that cannot be ignored.

Who among us, cannot be moved by the gentleness of spring? To me, each tiny swelling bud upon a tree is a miracle to be exclaimed over; every tulip and daffodil forcing its way through the frozen ground, is a some of triumph. If I am fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of the returning geese, my heart soars longingly to meet their flight and yearns to accompany them.

Who can resist the first warm kiss of early summer sunshine—a lover, promising the delights of a summer yet to come. Latent gypsy blood stirs and four walls can no longer contain me. I can well understand at this time of the year, our early ancestor's pagan worship of the sun, for truly it affirms life.

I fervently wish that as people shrug off the bonds of their winter apparel, they can also shrug away the frowns and lines of care upon their faces. The majority of us are, unfortunately, materialistic, committed only to the self-destructive desire of catching up to that elusive "Jones family".

Take a moment though, to listen to the birds; their lives are a song of love expressing the sheer joy of just existing in this brief instant in eternity.

It should be enough for all of us to say to ourselves: I have known the joy of love and the glory of music. I have felt happiness in the sound of a child's laughter and I have seen the stars against the midnight sky. I have perceived the majesty of mountains and the deep, tranquil blue of the lakes.

Should it not be more than enough for any of us to simply say: I am—therefore, I am blessed.

Doctors' bills not as bad as they look

By Don O'Hearn
Queen's Park Bureau
Of The Herald

TORONTO—Doctors once again have been taking their annual mauling.

The annual statement of payouts by OHP has been released, and a good share of the media immediately have pounced on it.

There were headlines that so many doctors had billed the government medical scheme for over \$100,000 last year and that a great many others had billed between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

The impression left, of course, and in many cases it was unfortunately the one intended to be left, was that doctors were pirating the government medical scheme.

Not mentioned in most of these stories was the fact that these figures represented gross income on the part of the doctors concerned and particularly that, in the majority of cases, they had extremely high expenses.

Some Milk

There undoubtedly are some doctors, perhaps not all that many, who are milking the government scheme. We have had evidence of that from prosecutions which the Ministry of Health itself has undertaken.

But to give the impression that the whole profession is milking the scheme is a mischievous exercise.

It really does nobody any good. A more revealing and accurate figure was one which did not receive much prominence in the news reports of the OHP results.

This showed that approximately half of the doctors had billed the plan for some \$10,000 or less.

This figure must have come as quite a shock to those who happened to notice it, and particularly to that very large segment of the public which today looks upon the medical profession as voracious.

For, considering the education and the

experience involved, \$40,000 per year today is really not all that much money. And once again, this would be the gross revenue of the doctors concerned.

For they also, down to the lowest general practitioner, have outside expenses. The \$40,000 would be their gross income in a good many cases, they might not be making much more than school teachers or skilled mechanics.

There are things that one can dislike today about trends in the medical profession. But at least we should be fair about it.

Just a small point about a big building

Well, they did it again. Regional council never fails to amaze and amuse us.

There they were last week, discussing whether or not they should sign an agreement with an Oakville developer for a new building on a single lot.

It sounded relatively straight forward and simple except for a few minor points that were brought up. But then those few minor points failed to click.

Something was wrong with this simple little single building on a single lot.

The staff were brought in and they explained the details of the multi-storey apartment building.

Did you say multi-storey apartment building?

Well yes, did we forget to

mention that minor point? We told you it was a single lot, didn't we?

Chairman of the region's works committee, Jack Raftis, who takes great pride in telling us that his committee is the best of the bunch, was a little upset about this new piece of information that hadn't been previous explained.

And for good reason. Had it not been for a few eleventh hour questions by two councillors a developer might, today, be preparing the foundations for a new apartment building in Oakville.

We're paying for that kind of efficiency?

Let's hope that mistake is going to come crashing down on some regional employees' head. An oversight like that in the private sector is reason for dismissal.

financial institutions and other intriguing things.

Mr. Rodriguez, fiercely opposing the bill, was critical of the fact that it was being sponsored by John Reid L-Kenora-Hairy River. With all the economic problems in Northern Ontario, Mr. Rodriguez felt that the Liberal MP had better things to do than speak on behalf of a banking system that has done nothing for the region.

"A running dog," was one description he used to describe Mr. Reid. Then he called him a "luncky" and a "foolman".

At this point, Cyril Symes NDP-Sault Ste. Marie interjected that Mr. Reid was really a "luncky". And Mr. Rodriguez thought that was even more appropriate.

Then, while the school class waited for their lesson on Canada's financial-political structure, Gilbert Parent L-St. Catharines arose to complain about the use of the word "luncky". But Mr. Rodriguez was not impressed. He only wished that Mr. Parent had sponsored the bill "rather than the other 'luncky'".

The lessons were improving rapidly.

No Translation

Meanwhile the simultaneous translators were having difficulty finding the exact French word for "luncky". Eymard Corbin L-Madawaska-Victoria wanted to know the meaning of the word.

Robert McCleave PC-Halifax-East Hants was in the chair as acting speaker and it was his profound duty to make a ruling. He had to consult his officials, who began thumbing through books.

Shortly, he ruled that the word "luncky" had "some definite connotations," but he couldn't rule it unparliamentary.

And at this point, Mr. Rodriguez offered his own interpretation and said that "the parliamentary term would probably be 'bumbo' instead of 'luncky'".

Mark Raines L-Burnaby-Seymour was on his feet in a flash. He wanted a definition of "bumbo".

Mr. McCleave was back to the dictionary, but it didn't help much.

"I cannot see the word 'bumbo' which is a cold rum punch." And he eased the situation by adding that this seemed "to be a very commendable suggestion."

This settled, Mr. Rodriguez went back to talking about the "incestuous" relationship between the Liberals and big business. And this angered Jean Roy L-Timmins.

He said Mr. Rodriguez should be ashamed of his performance. "If he cannot flush that big head of his through the toilet, he should not leave his extra mess around."

I'd love to read the essays the kids write about their visit to Parliament.

What are we getting for our \$22?

What happened to personal commitments? The desire to assist simply because you feel concerned enough to act?

Why are we paying a group of people \$22 each not particularly to do anything but simply to be present at a meeting?

That's the stipend now being paid members of the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, \$22 per meeting, an increase of \$2. They also pick up mileage.

Based on last week's three-hour meeting of the authority that come out to about \$8 per hour.

Fortunately only a small portion of the entire authority were out for the meeting. Should we ever get them all together it's going to cost us about \$800.

For that money you get seven

members who dominate the conversation, three who join in occasionally and the remainder who remain silent throughout the entire meeting.

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