

Minority groups are an important voice

Over the past two weeks we've heard—in totally unrelated incidents—comments by elected officials that would indicate a worrisome development in thinking among our official representatives. The gist of their comments has been that vocal minority groups are bothersome disruptions in the normal order of things and that their importance should be played down. The normal order of things, they feel, serves the silent majority and that is the group to whom the system should be keyed.

Basing their actions upon that attitude, some of our representatives have developed strong antagonistic attitudes towards any individuals or groups appearing before them to either air a beef or ask a question. Certainly some of that antagonism may be deserved. Some minority groups have, indeed, offered anything but reasonable attitudes themselves when making their official or unofficial statements. Antagonism has, in those instances, deservedly bred contempt. But our local and regional councillors and our board of education trustees should consider themselves fortunate to have the resources and knowledge offered freely by such very responsible minority groups as the Concerned

Citizens Group (who are busily battling Hydro's 500kV line), the Norval Community Association, the Georgetown and Acton Chambers of Commerce, homeowners in Ashgrove and Hornby, Renaissance, and, yes, even an individual such as "Wicked Willy" Johnson. These minorities may, indeed, offer only a very select viewpoint but the quality of their presentations have been remarkably high in both content and presentation. All have gone to great pains to present well supported arguments supporting their causes.

In recent weeks we've seen residents of Cameron Street in Acton and Marywood Meadows in Georgetown work, through town council and its committees, to obtain results for their respective problems. In one instance it seemed as though some councillors felt that one appearance was all that was required at which time the feelings were still amicable. A second appearance by that same group produced an unnecessary hostility. In other words, don't become too insistent. But it's the public's right to insist on their own behalf. Representatives and the people they are representing must work together. Countering opinions are bound to crop up; after all, that's life. However both sides must respect each other when coming face to face.



On The Home Front

Notes from a picnic table

by Susan De Facendis
Not wanting to miss one moment of today's glorious sunshine, I moved pen and paper out to the picnic table in our back garden, in the vain hope of accomplishing a column. Now that I am comfortably settled however, I find the outdoor distractions are overwhelming and my mind has either finally

blanked out (could this be a permanent condition?) or has been cooked by the heat of today's sun. My eyes stray to the vegetable garden and flower beds, now showing the results of three days hard labour that has reduced me to a feeling of definite kinship with the hunchback of Notre Dame, complete with aching muscles, trembling knees and broken finger nails.

A tiny red spider, busy spinning a web in a nearby geranium, catches my attention. Such wasted time and effort! I am sure this nucleus of workmanship will be rudely destroyed the next time I turn on the garden hose, but he'll no doubt stubbornly rebuild again and again. In the momentary quiet a little sparrow arrives, boldly looking for remnants of the regular early morning bread I threw out for them and I wonder if his wife ever complains about the lack of variety when he takes it back to the nest.

What! Italian crusty bread again, when you know I have an urge for pickles and ice cream? I can literally see the peas growing and hear the petunias soaking up the moisture from last night's watering, everything, except me, is bursting with life and vitality; the dandelions of course, being the liveliest of all. Does anyone ever win a war with weeds?

especially when one's youngest child believes wishes will come true by blowing dandelion seeds off their stems with one enormous breath. She compounds the whole effort by bringing the dandelions home, by the armful, from the local park - as though I don't have enough of my own already! A small aircraft passes overhead. Where has it been and where is it going? A bulldozer roars in the distance, digging out yet another swimming pool for some fortunate family somewhere.

The first bee I have seen this season alights in a state of ecstasy upon a yellow pansy, and this year honey production starts to roll again. A small ant scurries across the patio stones, appearing erratic and inefficient - but, I am sure much better organised than myself. I notice a hedge that needs trimming and a paper bag that has untidily blown into a corner and I know that if I go inside the house it will desperately need vacuuming and dusting. But on a day like this, it is all too easy to push the guilty feelings of things undone to the back of one's mind.

Yes, it is a beautiful day. A glorious, warm, early summer kind of day. A rare day for idle thoughts and inaction. I am simply going to sit, commune with the radishes, soak in the warmth and watch the sun climb higher into the cloudless blue sky. Ah! Summer time!

On Parliament Hill

What can Habitat achieve?

By Stewart MacLeod
Ottawa Bureau
Of The Herald

OTTAWA—I was fully prepared to ignore this mammoth Habitat conference in Vancouver on the grounds that at least it wouldn't harm anyone - but now I am not so sure these grounds are valid.

I just read that the CBC is planning 15 television specials on the 12-day conference, not to mention 10 hours of live coverage on FM radio and two daily programs on AM radio.

Are they trying to drive us crazy? It's a great idea for the United Nations to bring together representatives of 140 countries to talk about the problems of human settlement. Heaven knows there are enough problems to solve. But you wonder just how much will be accomplished by 5,000 delegates—most of whom can't make any commitments on behalf of their governments—as they swap philosophical papers on the need for better living conditions.

In the name of Canada's national pride, the conference has been turned into an extravagant spectacle. The cost of hosting the meeting will be more than \$14 million. And when you add the untold millions spent by visiting delegations - as many as 25,000 people could be involved - you tend to wonder whether the money would be better spent on solving some human settlement problems in a troubled country.

Results Unlikely
I suppose we shouldn't be too cynical about these things, and perhaps this meeting will help lay some groundwork for future international co-operation. But when you get that many people, representing countless interests, and working under an agenda that includes just about every problem known to man, only to incurable optimism would predict concrete results.

They'll be talking about housing, about pollution, about the most effective use of natural resources, about risks of war, about

urban renewal, about urban violence - you name it.

And how are Communist and capitalist countries going to agree on resolutions calling for the public ownership of land? They'll probably all agree that pollution is a bad thing, and war will be roundly denounced but no solutions are going to emerge from a congregation of this magnitude.

Of course we'll be able to message our national ego by reminding everyone that Canada is hosting the biggest United Nations conference in history. But I am not sure it will impress people who now are forced to live in ghettos.

Incidentally, up until austerity struck, the government had planned to spend \$100 million on demonstration projects involving human settlement. And thousands of delegates would have travelled from coast to coast to learn how we have solved our problems. But under the restraint program, charity begins at home.

Many Troubles

From the beginning, the Habitat conference was beset by troubles. The organizing secretariat here had a bigger turnover than the Toronto Argonauts, the mayor of Vancouver didn't want the meeting, and for a time the Canadian government would have been relieved if the whole monstrous event just disappeared.

But now that it's on, we're officially realistic. The eyes of the world will be on Canada as one representative after another calls for great co-operation, more spending by the developed countries, and more international understanding in tackling the problems of human settlement. We'll hear that the rich nations of the world can no longer go on ignoring the needs of the poor, that the poor nations of the world must develop greater technology; that newly-developed countries must share their fortunes with their unfortunate brothers.

And it will all be true. But think how much more effective it would be if 100 heads of state met in some really underdeveloped country and committed their governments to a new international project on human settlement. That would focus more attention on the problem than all the glossy photographs produced by the Canadian government for this current spectacle.

It would also make better television programs.

Rookie Queen's Park MPP's are learning the hard way

By Derek Nelson
Queen's Park Bureau
Of The Herald

TORONTO—Ah, the things a rookie MPP doesn't know. In this house of minorities one-third of the 125 members are newcomers, who aren't privy to all the wild and wonderful ways that the provincial parliament operates.

MPP Doug Moffatt (NDP-Durham East), provoked consternation among the veterans, including party colleague Jim Renwick (NDP-Riverdale), by trying to have "expert witnesses" debate the safety of aluminum wiring before a legislative "supply" committee studying ministerial spending estimates.

Clear Idea
The precedent-setting idea upset the old-timers mainly because of the hours of parliamentary time it would devour.

The committee clerk explained it this way: "There are 225 hours of supply, so for every 'ministry' sent out to committee you deduct 10 hours from the clock. The committees have to report back within 75 days, so every day the House sits a day is deducted, including Wednesday (when the house doesn't sit)."

Easy Math
All clear? While admitting "I never understood the mathematics" of time allocation Mr. Renwick said what it really means is that the time they'd use interviewing the "expert witnesses" would come off other committees

and the house proper as well as their own committee. For that reason he helped vote down Mr. Moffatt's plea.

At least one other rookie MPP wondered why two hours couldn't be added on after the estimates were heard, and was still puzzled after the vote.

Tradition is a wonderful thing. Rapid Transit
Opposition members of the Ontario legislature continue to be less than enchanted with the provincial government's experiments in public transit carriers.

NDP Leader Stephen Lewis wondered about recapturing part of the \$6 million Ontario is spending on new transit designs if they should prove as ill-fated as the magnetic levitation system of two years, "even though you are now using wheels, which is an innovative thought."

"Round ones?" MPP Mike Braugh (NDP-Oshawa) asked, caught between hop and dabble.

New PM
Queen's Park MPP's seem in some confusion about who the next prime minister of Canada will be.

Premier William Davis, while answering a question in the legislature, happened to phrase his reply so that it included the words "and the suggestion made by the leader of our national party and the next prime minister of Canada..."

"Surely they weren't both there, were they?" asked an innocent-sounding Jim

Breithaup (Lib-Kitchener).

Tough Work
MPP's are as prone as the rest of us to grumble about their working conditions.

In recent committee discussions they've been hammering away at various features of their job they consider objectionable.

MPP Mike Cassidy (NDP-Oshawa Centre) is still leading his crusade for higher salaries for MPP's through the mechanism of an independent committee.

MPP Sean Conway (Lib-Renfrew North) can't understand why he is forbidden to have a small portable tape recorder into which he can dictate memos, letters, and so on, and instead must have a large non-portable on his office desk. (Small recorders "disappear," staff say.)

Times Change
MPP Frank Drea (PC-Scarboro Centre) is upset because MPP's have to pay security deposits on telephones in their riding offices out of their own pockets.

A dozen other MPP's have their own complaints, from expense accounts to collect telephone calls to constituency office salaries to the attitude of attached civil servants.

Things have changed since Mr. Conway's grandfather sat in the house from 1926 to 1945 and made "very happily so at the time, I thing \$1,500 a year and... a rail pass which was a saviour to him."

MPP's now make the equivalent of \$28,000, have two offices and two assistants and other benefits.

Queen's Park Commentary

Government looks again at insurance companies

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

TORONTO Since time immemorial, it seems, the insurance industry has not been in the finest of odors here.

In the thirties Mitch Hepburn put through an amendment to the Insurance Act which would give the government power to set insurance rates.

The act has never been proclaimed, meaning it has never been law, but also, despite pressures from the industry, it has never been taken off the books.

In the fifties the industry's rate boosting practices on auto insurance used to make Leslie Frost furious. In more recent years there has seldom, if ever, been a session at which there hasn't been complaints about insurance.

Deep Look
Now the feelings of the years may break wide open.

A select committee has been named to inquire into the insurance industry (formally it is called the Select Committee on Company Law.)

The inquiry bears promise of being very searching.

The terms of reference give it almost unlimited scope.

And its membership from the opposition parties includes some of the best talent in the house.

Liberal Vernon Singer, veteran and lawyer who has long been on the insurance warpath, is chairman. Also from his party are lawyer James Bullbrook and accountant Marvin Shore.

NDP representatives include lawyers James Renwick, a brain, and Pat Lawlor.

These men will not only assure there is a detailed examination but also an intelligent one.

Open Doors
The committee could recommend public

Should there be parents licenses?

by Gerry Landsborough
This Viewpoint column has come about in most disheartening fashion.

A young Toronto father, 28 years of age, has been sentenced to 18 months in reformatory for "criminal negligence" in the death of his nineteen-day-old son.

The baby's throat has been partially destroyed from overly hot food, its leg was twisted and broken causing a spinal fracture, there were bite marks on the baby's nose, 13 lesions on the body and the right hand was lifeless from loss of circulation.

This baby was "nineteen days old." Mr. Justice Krever told the sobbing father that having read the psychiatric evidence he was satisfied that the baby's death was not intentional but due to the man's "inadequacies as a father."

This kind of offence normally is one symptom of a penitentiary term, but I fear that would cause danger to you by the very nature of your personality," said Justice Krever to the baby's father.

Our first comment has to be, what kind of penitentiaries do we run in this country when lately all we hear from magistrates is "we can't send you to prison because you might get hurt?"

How can we raise citizens to 28 years of age, allowing them to become parents with less practical instruction than the humane society gives with each new puppy or kitten? How can we be so blind?

We protest the damndest things these days. What protest will we hear regarding the death of this 19-day-old infant?

We issue licenses for everything and anything, most often everything of little importance. Yet any "jerk" can have a baby.

We talk about rights...our precious freedom. When is ignorance ever right? This poor, pathetic man who will serve 18 months in reformatory did not have the right to destroy a human life.

His ignorance is our ignorance. His crime is our crime.

If as Justice Krever feels the baby's death was not intentional but due to fatherhood inadequacies, "Why" in today's society is this necessary?

We appear to be "social serviced" to death, yet where were the agencies to help this man and his wife who he claims, is mentally ill. According to the baby's father, he "bit" the baby's nose to make him cry to see if his wife would take notice of the crying.

So many people tell me "they don't like to read the papers." "It makes me sick" is a common remark. Social problems never disappear by closing your eyes and ignoring them.

No magistrate should have to defer sentence because of what will happen to the potential prisoner. A 19-day-old baby should not have to die in such a fashion.

Answers?
Answers only come when you are willing to look long and hard at the questions, then act. The education of our young people with respect to parenthood, in today's society is a "must."

Times have changed. People have changed. Lifestyles have changed. It is not enough to say that our laws need altering. It is not enough to say such terrible things as the death of the baby and the sentencing of the father shouldn't happen: They did.

Do something now. Write your M.P. Talk to your friends. Tell your minister how you feel. Write a letter to your editor. Remember that your son or daughter could marry such an individual. Ignorance does not know social class. It could be your grandchild. Tell Children's Aid how you feel.

We need education towards parenthood and day-to-day living, beginning in public schools. We need some type of licensing, something that says your more than biologically ready.

Rights? That baby doesn't have any now. Don't speak to me about rights.