

Random thoughts

It's been a random sort of week, so some random thoughts.

Pioneer Days again brought the crowds downtown. There was plenty to see and do, and for that the organizers should be congratulated. However, it would be nice if there was a little more of a pioneer atmosphere to the whole thing.

Rock bands are great but wouldn't a good old fiddlin' session be that much better? Even a jazz band would be closer to fitting the supposed theme of Pioneer Days.

A few more store fronts featuring the old time motif would have helped as well. Otherwise the Pioneer Days were a lot of fun.

While some of the Halton Board of Education trustees were tassing words like "amicable" and "friendly" around last Thursday night in reference to their new contract, we were a bit disturbed to hear a few other trustees muttering "no alternative" and "we got shafted." With that kind of opinion coming from our representatives it looks to us as if the provincial government, through Bill 100, has put the taxpayers on a perpetual merry-go-round with the teachers setting the speed.

We couldn't help but feel sorry for the rezion's works committee. They had been handling the selection of the regional landfill site right up till last Wednesday at which time they lost all control.

Granted there is justification behind the Tremaine-Britannia ratepayers asking why their area seemed to have been marked right from the start to be high on the list of considered sites. But for some councillors to turn around at this point and accuse the consultants and the works committee of having produced a simply a report justifying site F's selection, that's low politics.

The entire matter appears to be coming down to a political decision and rarely have those been to the benefit of the taxpayers. The decision should be made with an eye on eventual costs, not strictly on the political implications.

Last but certainly not least; School's out. Now, more than any other time of the year, parents should be ever wary of what their children are doing and where they're doing it. Accident reports of bicycle and car run-ins seem to be getting more and more frequent. We've avoided having a fatality thus far, let's keep that record straight.

Queen's Park Commentary

Pressure groups-- pro or con

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

TORONTO—One of the facts of life today which is not too well realized is the trend under which we are more and more being subject to pressure groups.

Quietly in recent years, there has been a consistent growth in the number of disgruntled special interest groups who make representations here (and at other seats of government) on an ever-widening spectrum of topics ranging from gay liberation to our trucking rules.

The growth of these groups in itself is not something to be regarded with any particular alarm. In essence, they represent our more participatory society of today.

But the trend toward power they have been reflecting should be a cause for concern.

Beer Drinking

The reason for this concern is that the noise which these pressure groups make tends to have an influence far beyond any justification.

Our public and social policies, generally speaking, are set by general consensus, if society is working in good order.

But pressure groups can disrupt that order.

As just one example (and perhaps it isn't the best one), a while ago there was a move underway to permit the sale of beer at sporting events in large stadiums.

A certain church denomination and not one of the larger ones, immediately started a campaign against this.

Some 5,000 letters arrived in the offices of Sidney Handelman, the minister in charge. Leaving no doubt that this was a designed campaign was the fact that nearly all the letters were similar, not exactly identical but with the same general points.

This protest obviously was not the result of any consensus. The bulk of the public probably didn't care whether beer was sold or not. Nevertheless, the protest worked. The idea was dropped.

Then Reports

This is a small example of what is happening on a larger scale.

Every day, it seems, there is a new special interest group of some form or other, which is getting at least the partial ears of government.

And then there are the reports

This is a day of reports, reports, and reports.

Anyone with long experience with government reports has learned to keep them at a distance.

Experience has shown that almost all reports are biased to some degree and that conclusions are to be regarded as opinions only and then to be carefully weighed.

But reports, no matter what on and by whom, are beginning to carry the same impact as the pressure groups.

In the minds of the public, and at least some of our politicians, they are loading a wallop which is far beyond their actual worth.

There are many conclusions to be drawn from this trend. Too many to be gone into here. But the basic one is that we are heading more and more into an unhealthy situation.



On Parliament Hill

Love: A temporary form of insanity curable by marriage

by Stewart MacLeod
Ottawa Bureau
Of The Herald

OTTAWA—If you're going to write about politics day after day, it's virtually impossible to keep issues in perspective without constant reference to a magnificent old book called "The Devil's Dictionary."

The trouble is, I haven't had one for years. And since the author, Ambrose Bierce, hasn't been seen since 1913, it isn't easy to pick up another copy. I have been searching for weeks.

"Excuse me," I said to a girl in one store "do you have a copy of 'The Devil's Dictionary'?"

"Sure," she replied, "you'll find it under 'the occult.' It's all about Satanism, isn't it?"

She led me to a section which dealt with Satanism, astrology, ghosts and witches.

"It wouldn't be here," I tried to explain. "You see it's really a humorous book. It defines politicians as 'those who have learned to rise about their principles...'"

"What's humorous about that?" she asked, with librarian rigidity. "Obviously, what you want will be with the dictionaries over there."

"I don't think so. I remember that the book defines a 'conservative' as 'a statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the Liberal who wishes to replace them with others.'"

"That's a dictionary," she said.

Not There

But the book wasn't in that section.

"Can you tell me anything else about it?" she asked.

"Well, I remember the definition of 'poverty.' It was that 'the number of plans for its abolition equals that of the reformers who suffer from it, plus that of the philosophers who know nothing about it...'"

"Let's look under poverty," she suggested.

"No, no, because this book also describes the Senate as 'a body of elderly gentlemen charged with high duties and misdemeanors...'"

That confused her, so I left. I went to another bookstore.

"I am looking for 'The Devil's Dictionary,' the book which describes politics as 'a strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles - the conduct of public affairs for private advantage...'"

The sales clerk was excited. "Is that the book that defines a 'representative' as 'a member of the Lower House in this world and without discernible hope of promotion to the next?'"

"That's it."

"I am sorry, we don't have it."

Off to another store.

"Do you have a copy of 'The Devil's Dictionary,' a book that defines 'Opposition' as 'the party that prevents the government from running amuck by hamstringing it?'"

"I remember that book," said the clerk.

"It described a lighthouse as 'a tall building on the seashore in which the government maintains a lamp and the friend of a politician.'"

"That's it," I repeated again.

"And it described 'Love' as 'a temporary insanity curable by marriage' and 'a lawyer' as 'one skilled in the circumvention of the law.'"

"I am particularly interested in the political section of the book," I said. "You know, that part which describes 'alliance' as 'the union of two thieves who have their hands so deeply inserted in each other's pockets that they cannot separately plunder a third.'"

"Haven't seen it for years," he said.

"But if you find it, buy me a copy."

All I remember

The guy at the next store remembered it, too. "I'll never forget the definition of 'quillotine,' he said. "It was described as 'a machine which makes a Frenchman shrug his shoulders.'"

I then quickly remembered the definition of "push" - one of two things mainly conducive to success, especially in politics. The other is pull.

The owner of the store joined the conversation. He recalled the book, and the definition of "consul" - "a person who having failed to secure an office from the people is given one by the administration on condition that he leave the country."

But he didn't stock the book. However, he knew an old fellow down the street who went in for this sort of thing.

"By golly," said the old fellow, "I think there is a copy in the basement. I'll be right back."

I could hear him shuffling through books down there, and then there was a long pause, followed by a chortle. "Hey, this must be it," he shouted. "An 'elector' is 'one who enjoys the sacred privilege of voting for the man of another man's choice.'"

He came up the stairs looking at the word "diplomacy" - "the patriotic art of lying for one's country."

Anyway, I got the book - or at least most of it. I am now going to take a week off and try to put things in perspective.

Viewpoint

But do they learn anything?

by Gerry Landsborough

This week's Viewpoint follows as a sequel to a recent column on child abuse. We wrote at the time of the lack of formal training we give our young people, towards effective parenting. This ignorance this lack of knowledge, on the part of our people leads directly to the battered baby syndrome.

Battered babies and abused children are the result of biological parenting as opposed to a knowledgeable and mature approach. The gap between being able to "make a baby" and care for a demanding tiny human being is the gap between planned parenthood and "getting pregnant."

Here in Halton, as far back as six years ago, recommendations were made by program councils in education for the need of parental training before parenthood. The program councils were set up as a means to provide methods of improving the system within the system. Those who served on these councils were often educators themselves trying to pinpoint what changes were needed within the system and whose recommendations were meant to enrich the educational programming of our young people.

The results of these recommendations would appear to have been given only slight consideration: lip service if you will.

Here in Halton, if a teacher wants to upgrade his or her teaching ability and knowledge with a year's leave of absence it is necessary to present a brief of proposals to the board for approval before any such leave is granted. While on sabbatical the teacher's salary is paid in full along with tuition fees and related costs. In the past few years many of Halton's most knowledgeable educators have found that after returning to the system is reluctant to place them in a program that would use their skills to the best advantage.

In Halton today we have educators who believe in parental training beginning at the grade school level. One such teacher with more than 18 years experience has tried without success to apply his special training in the field of "parental training before parenthood" here in Halton.

The board's hesitancy appears to be based on a "walking on eggshells" sensitivity to public reaction to change. Even when the change in the case of formal education in parenting has been studied, recommended, and, in effect, already paid for in terms of teacher upgrading.

Tax dollars are the most abused monies around today. In private enterprise a company has to justify upgrading of employees and expects a return on any investment made. Within the Halton education system teachers upgrading sabbaticals have to be justified from a proposal point of view, but nothing appears to be done with the finished product.

One case in point here in Halton involves one teacher who was given a leave of absence and was paid approximately \$30,000 (tax dollars) to train in a specialized program for one year. After completion of the approved course by the Halton board this teacher found that the approved training could not be put into practise by the board. Irony isn't it?

When we wrote of the necessity of parental training before parenthood we were not aware of the variety of proposals that have already been made to the Halton Board of Education from within the system. Somewhere in the upper echelons of bureaucracy and administration there is a wide gap between what has already been paid for and what can be put into practise. But then why justify it, it's only tax dollars.

Hindsight seems to be a truly Canadian virtue. When we see the results of people in trouble—family court, juvenile hall, Childrens Aid, the battered baby syndrome—we seem to forget that all people were once children and an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Education will not cure the problems of a troubled society but with the removal of true ignorance often comes the light of understanding the first step towards our brave new world.

On The Home Front

Ten years of life

By Susan DeFacendis

Now having a family of my own -- a family that appears determined to hurtle themselves through the years as quickly as possible -- I can sympathise and relate to my parents and the problems they faced, with a different perspective entirely.

For years they must have gritted their teeth, as I do now, over the constant arguments and fights I had with my younger brothers, sure in their minds that we would never, ever become friends. This aspect of missing a family however, cannot compare to the ordeal all parents must inevitably face, as one by one their family leaves home, whether through marriage, work or a need to express independence.

I can only say that in this regard, my parents were exceptional. They faced it three times; hid their tears from us; gave us their blessing and let us know the door was always open.

I am sure every family must have a mixture of rebels and conformists. While I am certain that the majority of growing children above all else, this does not always reflect the needs and wishes of the

younger generation, who appear to strongly advocate the quality of their lives today, rather than safety.

In many ways, this is understandable, a swing of the pendulum in time. They have been raised today in an environment of comparative security and now years for adventure. Many of us, surviving either a depression or the long uncertain years covering a succession of wars, in turn look only for a quiet, secure lifestyle.

What is in store for our children? We cannot know. All we can do is love them, guide them, prepare them to stand on their own feet, then let them go.

This is what I would like to share a letter with you that I recently received from my youngest brother, now living in Toronto on a more or less permanent basis, who left home at the age of 21 to travel and work his way around a greater portion of our global village for a period of five years. I hope you will find it somewhat thought-provoking. It begins:

"As another decade of my life comes to an end, I find myself drawn by a state of introspection to the typewriter, where I intend to share some of my observations with you, my friend.

The end of one's third decade is a curious time of life; neither young nor old, ingenu nor mope, beyond the ungainly precociousness of adolescence and the excesses of the twenties, one stands on the threshold of full maturity and adulthood. Almost overnight the brow seems more furrowed (perhaps there is merely more forehead on display); one becomes comically out of date in one's ideas, taste in music, clothing etc. In some cases, the individual has completely ceased to be. Franz Schubert, to cite a famous example, was either dead or perilously close to it by his thirtieth birthday.

At this formidable milestone, I feel it very natural to have a look over my shoulder for a spell. What could be more important than an occasional retrospective glance, a check, as it were, on the table of contents? When I look back ten years to the beginning of my third decade I see a young college boy with deep yearning for adventure beyond the chaste and unfulfilling academic groves and Palm Groves of his sleepy provincial town in sport, a young man biding his time, "an empty page" as Mr. Oscar Hammerstein wrote in that cute duet between Liesl and the nice young telegraph boy, "that someone will want to write on."

Well, what a decade! All of you and more besides have scribbled and scrawled upon me to greater or lesser degrees of indelibility. But what larks! I've drunk wine with royalty and hoboes; I've met Twiggy, Reggie Jackson and Zal Yanofsky; I've marched on the White House and been tear-gassed in Berkeley; I've burned my buttocks on the sun-scorched beaches of St. Tropez and been nearly stepped on by a bear in Canada's mighty Rockies.

I've seen Graham Hill win the Grand Prix de Monaco and watched the 703rd and 704th home runs of Hank Aaron; I've scored a hole-in-one; I've been divorced but never married; I've seen the Beatles and the Beach Boys, Abby Hoffman and Abbie Hoffman, Ozawa and Jagger, Gielgud and Olivier; I've consorted with beautiful women in forests and mountains, on deserted ocean beaches and in sordid taverns -- and appeared in the same Life magazine as Raquel Welch.

I've been to France seven times; I've sung in the sunshine and laughed every day; I've addressed people in English, French, German, Italian, Greek, Dutch and an amusing amalgam of the Scandinavian tongues.

I've seen Herbert Kalmbach being

strilled by Sam Ervin and hitch-hiked from Athens in London -- San Diego to Dawson City -- from Nice to Stockholm and from Berkeley to Toronto. I've walked from Orillia to Bobcaygeon -- and in the space of a mere decade I have earned and spent nearly nineteen thousand dollars.

Okay, I hear you saying, that's all very fascinating, but what have you done lately? Fair enough. As I sit here in my little room overlooking a quiet, tree-shaded street in the east end of Toronto, listening to the music of Mr. Erik Satie on the radio, I'm the first to admit that I'm not selling the world on fire. Far from it. But then I'm not dead either. So what's to become of me?

Just last week I played golf (81) with a fellow from South Africa, who recommended his homeland for its excellent climate, abundance of jobs, cheap living and strong beer, but it's probably hard to avoid buying South African goods.

Another recent suggestion is New Zealand. Apart from the fact that they probably wouldn't let me in, I can't think of much wrong with that nation of twin isles. I like sheep and mild winters. I could certainly live without ever again hearing about Sacha Trudeau, Tiger Williams, Olympic coins,

Ontario Place, Mel Lastman, the waiters at the Morrissey, air traffic controllers or the CBC weather forecasts. Knowing me though, I'll probably still be here when the snow falls again, griping about the cold the price of beer, the Leafs and all the usual ennui.

Am I boring you? There won't be much more. I just thought that turning thirty called for some kind of statement. It's funny really; I've dreaded it for years, but now that it's here, so what? Here I sit, newly-shorn as befits an older man. My room's a mess, as always. Things don't change much.

If you have nothing better to do, give me a call and we'll go out for a couple of beers, O.K.?"

This then, is the brother with whom I in turn, fought with, protected and bossed. He has probably packed more experiences and living into his few years than most people do in a lifetime.

Whether or not you agree with him is immaterial, it is, after all, his life. I can only add that he is one of the most interesting people I shall ever know -- and undoubtedly the happiest. I am extremely proud that, not only can I call him my brother, but my friend.