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A backlash may backfire

Officials of Halton board of education have said they fear a backlash from parents over the French immersion course which will begin next year. Taken in light of the emotionalism that now surrounds the issue of the French language in Canada, their prediction bears reflection upon by any mother or father wanting nothing but the best for his or her offspring.

We have no argument with emotionalism being brought to bear in an argument even though past experience suggests that decisions and actions taken in the cold light of reasons are less costly; sometimes it isn't until you've had a good jolt of emotionalism that you learn where you really stand and, perhaps, for the first time take interest in what's around you.

But as is usual in such situations, where federalists are calling separatists "traitors", or worse, and there's a real danger, no matter how much the politicians may try to minimize it, that the country may crack up, a voice of cold reason is little heard.

"An early second language start improves intellectual performance in the later stages of education. The way to make a country bilingual is to let the children hear the second language very early."

Those are the words of Wilder Graves Penfield, a director and

consultant of the Montreal Neurological Institute for over 40 years and professor of neurology at McGill University. Dr. Penfield, who died last year, made the statement in an article titled: "The Superiority of the Bilingual Brain, in his 1970 book: *Second Thoughts: Science, The Arts and The Spirit*."

"There is good evidence that familiarity with additional languages, even though limited in the first decade, endows the normal child with a more efficient and useful brain," Dr. Penfield wrote. And for a child to have a second language, preferably started on before the ages of six or seven, "...does not detract from the academic performance in the mother tongue but gives him a real advantage. It enriches family culture and gives it strength. It increases earning power."

The decisions we as a community make are justified often by the claim that they are in the interests of the future generation, of our children. But a vision of Canada split and of its people unable to talk to each other for want of a second language because "we're not going to have French rammed down our throats," is almost too horrible to contemplate.

It's time we stopped gambling our children's futures on the cast of an emotionally loaded pair of dice. They'll have more than enough to berate us about without that as well.

Armed forces public support

Canada should consider closely the role of its armed forces before any consideration is made on conscription for either a standing peacetime army or to alleviate the unemployment rate among young people.

The country must re-evaluate what it sees as the role of the forces which for the past decade or more has suffered from large-scale commitments, lack of manpower and inferior equipment.

In the same period three successive government white papers have given the forces the mission to become unified, to protect our shores; to continue supporting NATO and NORAD; engage in United Nations peacekeeping operations; and to protect sovereignty in the Arctic.

Today's youth are better educated, enlightened and eager to prove they can contribute to society. They can not, however, realize the fulfillment of their aspirations if they are saddled with a challenge which offers no satisfaction but heavy workloads, continually changing policies and a lack of acceptance by the community at large.

Whether it's challenge can be provided by conscription is anyone's guess. But the route to achieving this challenge will have to be accepted by the community and support given to

the policy. The support will not be great since any move into this area will be seen as a cop-out by the government in its efforts to overcome unemployment.

Defence Minister Barney Danson is reported this week as saying his remarks on conscription were misinterpreted. He wants young people to consider the military as part of their job search program. That would be ideal if only such a suggestion were to work.

With manpower stretched to the limit, enrolments in the Canadian Forces are limited by the ability of the military to train people for a particular trade role. There are now waiting lists for most trades — except the combat roles of infantryman, some sea trades, artillery technician or tank crewman — which means that many unemployed youth will likely stay unemployed while awaiting intake into the forces.

In the end the procrastination of the Trudeau government in freezing the defence budget, reducing the numbers of the military, and the government's political decisions or trade concessions — as in the trade agreement with European Community to re-equip the forces will have to end before the military gains credibility among young people.

Trudeau's cabinet changes baffling

By STEWART MacLEOD
Ottawa Bureau
Of The Herald

Being bedded down with a minor ailment, I should have had plenty of time to rationalize all the moves in Prime Minister Trudeau's 12-person cabinet shuffle. But I must plead for a further delay. Some of the changes just baffle me.

I am not talking about the key appointment — that of Jean Chretien to the all-important portfolio of finance. Everyone who has followed the determined career of the 43-year-old small-town lawyer will applaud the promotion of this competent and congenial minister. And it is rather difficult to argue with the prime minister for selecting Chretien as Canada's first French-Canadian finance minister.

But since that finance portfolio is a traditional graveyard for aspiring politicians and since Chretien is obviously the most valuable, and popular, Liberal MP from Quebec, I wonder whether his future should be jeopardized at this time. He will be clearly needed in our marathon unity debates.

Second-guessing prime ministerial ap-

pointments is one of the easier undertakings but if Trudeau was determined to have a French-speaking finance minister, I would have thought that Marc Lalonde, who had been his health minister for five years, would have been a reasonable choice.

Lalonde has all the necessary qualifications for finance, including an established ability to reorganize the bureaucracy around him. Chretien has just as many qualifications of course, along with a down-to-earth wit and charm — but these are attributes that might be more useful in federal-provincial relations, the new responsibilities of Lalonde.

GOOD NEGOTIATOR

I have a feeling that Chretien, while he may perform marvels in inspiring Canada's business community, could make an even greater contribution in dealing directly with the provinces. Lalonde, consistently on the same wave length as the prime minister, has an inherent inflexibility when it comes to constitutional matters. He may relieve Trudeau of some chores in this area, but he is unlikely to alter any basic federal approaches

to the provinces.

Chretien would have left his own trademark on these responsibilities. And, if federal-provincial relations were his sole responsibility, he would have found the time to go into Quebec to lead the forces of federalism. When he speaks in Quebec, people listen.

As finance minister he will no doubt spend a good deal of time in that province, but the very nature of his responsibilities will restrict his activities. For the foreseeable future he will be kept busy talking about unemployment and inflation.

I found a few other cabinet changes baffling. That was quite a promotion for Monique Begin, a one-year veteran of the revenue portfolio who now becomes a minister of health and welfare. That's a massive department, and she is also in charge of the status of women.

IRONIC TWIST

This has a rather ironic twist because under the umbrella of Begin's department lies the secretariat for fitness and amateur sport, a group headed by cabinet colleague

Death knell for Acton group?

By BOB RUTTER
Herald editor

Acton for Actonians may have heard its death knell within the past two weeks.

The sound of defeat comes at a time when optimism is running high that some action to reconstitute Acton as an area municipality might result from a meeting between committee members and officials of the ministry of treasury, economics and intergovernmental affairs Oct. 3.

First and foremost, Actonians are fighting for an identity. They believe, and they are right, that Acton has lost its identity through regional government. They also believe that regional government is costing too much.

Events in the past two weeks, however, may have refuted the second argument. Milton Mayor Donald Gordon released a report compiled from audited municipal statements for the year 1973 (the last year of county government) and the three years of regional government ending 1976. His conclusions, which I might add most observers tend to agree with, show Milton bearing the brunt of the cost of regional government because of its large rural areas with low assessment.

But the most astonishing fact is that Halton Hills comes out the big winner with a

net decrease in taxation revenue of \$78,000. Then to add a further twist to the argument, Ontario Treasurer Darcy McKeough released his own figures last week showing Halton Hills with the lowest three-year increase in municipal taxes of 31 comparable communities.

Mr. McKeough also praised the concept of budgeting low debt charges and effective control over municipal spending. This has been the concept embraced by the former town of Georgetown and became policy for Halton Hills.

It was also at this Hamilton news conference that Mr. McKeough responding to questions from a Herald reporter virtually quashed any possibility of a reconstituted Acton when he said he will not review regional government in Halton, nor would he allow creation of a fifth community.

A further development, however, questions the purpose of the Actonians committee in seeking secession from Halton Hills.

In a letter Sept. 7 to Mr. McKeough, Acton (Ward 1) Coun. Pat McKenzie, who served on the Acton council for many years, stated he, former Mayor Les Doby and Coun. Peter Marks explained the 1973 fiscal position

of Acton to the committee but their comments in support of Halton Hills went unheeded.

In the letter Mr. McKenzie pointed out the areas where improved services have come about: these include a full-time planner which Acton did not have; extensive water and sanitary sewer improvements; and maintained a per capita debt of \$42.

He also called "unrealistic" a proposal for Acton to take part of the Nassagaweya and Eglar to form a new town. Such a new town with increased rural services upkeep (mainly roads) would likely not survive, especially, Mr. McKenzie says, since Acton only pays about 20 per cent of the mill rate for Halton Hills.

Considering the fiscal situation of Acton in 1973 regional government may have been the salvation of the community. Mr. McKenzie refutes in his letter an argument made to this writer during the election campaign by a gentleman from Acton that local municipal cost would be tailored to fit the town's ability to pay.

Acton was required in its last year of operation to sell town-owned land

There is confusion among politicians over

just how Acton entered regional government. Some people say it was \$40,000 in the red, an amount which had to be absorbed by Halton Hills.

Mr. McKenzie also touches on a recent Acton issue when he states that for 20 years the old Acton township has been crumbling and falling apart with no one expressing an interest in its restoration.

It appears that since the decision to tear down the building was made by a council that is not considered local there was a hue and cry culminating in formation of a citizen's group to save the building.

Acton is faced with an identity crisis. Anyone would admit as much. But to consider now trying to become something it hasn't the resources to become is not the answer.

The creation of a strong downtown business association, creation of a business improvement area, saving the town hall and a continuing community spirit are steps toward restoring the identity.

Instead of seeking to disassociate itself with Halton Hills and regional government Acton for Actonians should be striving to develop an identity within the existing framework of government. After 3½ years of regional government the time is right.



Change is a double edged sword

By GERRY LANDSBOROUGH

Change and changes are day-to-day happenings. With the changing of the seasons I always seem to pause for a moment and reflect on the effect of all the changes that are a part of our lives.

For me fall has always had a sort of melancholy note to it. As beautiful as the changing colors are, and as crisp and fresh as the fall air is, we quickly become aware that another summer has slipped away and the long days of winter will soon be with us again. It is this change, both in the seasons and in ourselves that we sense so strongly.

Summer days have a sort of carefree and easy going air about them — nothing is of any great urgency. Yet as soon as the leaves start to fall we find ourselves snapped back like an elastic band into the routine of things and the lazy feeling of summer days are left quickly behind.

What we term a feeling of "melancholy" at the falling of the leaves is the sudden reminder that winter is approaching and once again its time to knuckle down and set goals and look forward to seeing them accomplished. The plight of many writers is that they procrastinate right up to the last possible moment before getting down to brass tacks, and summer offers almost endless excuses for procrastination.

The effect of the constant changes going through our lives brings to mind the changes in the school curriculum for young people.

In order to give them the benefit of knowledge outside the confining walls of the classroom some individual came upon the idea of field study trips. Such a wonderful invention on someone's part! Yet what actually happened is that the "basics" seems to have suffered at the extra benefit of study outside the classroom.

Change is of course necessary as winter's blowing snows promising the change to the new growth of spring. Yet change can be a double-edged sword and it is not always for the good.

When we are "alive" in the sense of alert and aware and part of life instead of being dragged along, we learn that though changes are necessary nothing in life is an absolute certainty. Scientists regard absolute certainty as an impossibility and the scientific approach is one of checking and double-checking all the time. So the intelligent thinking person accepts that mistakes occur as quickly as the changes in life.

Some areas of education today are a mistake — a 40 per cent failure in literacy bears this out. When we speak of getting back to the basics we don't mean that all is lost and the only approach is to go back to the whole

system of bygone days. What going back to the basics means is the realization that field trips cannot be made at the expense of fundamental studies.

Reading and the comprehension of the written word is the corner stone for all other learning. Change is also the ability to see the mistake, admit it and make another change.

Changes are an inevitable part of our society but in order for all to benefit from change we must make sure that the changes continue to push us forward, not further behind. To see a mistake and admit it is to make a change.

The only people I know that don't make any mistakes are dead and buried — to live is to grow, to grow is to change, to change is to accept challenge and in this process we all are open to error.

To see a mistake and admit it and to make a change is what we call being "intelligently alive."

Looking through our files

30 YEARS AGO

Movie houses recently acquired by Odeon Theatres of Canada in Georgetown and Acton will show pictures six nights a week instead of four as had been the case formerly. The movie house in Georgetown, which was called the Gregory Theatre, will be renamed the Roxy. Jack Polly was appointed theatre manager in Georgetown.

Town council decided to ask voters in the next municipal election if they were in favor of a municipal board of education elected annually in Georgetown, and if they would support a one mill grant (approximately \$1,339) for the Lorne Scots Regiment Band.

The Lions Club did a census of Georgetown which showed a population of 3,115.

20 YEARS AGO
Bill MacCormack of MacCormack's Drug Store was appointed a director of the Georgetown Rotary Club.

An editorial in The Herald noted that council had decided to buy a chain of office for the mayor. They planned to have the names of all former mayors of Georgetown inscribed on the chain.

Claude Kentner and Norman Incam won county honors in lawn bowling when they were awarded the Bank of Commerce trophy at a tournament in Milton.

10 YEARS AGO
A course on driver education was introduced for students at Georgetown and district

Private sector flexes muscles

By DON O'HEARN
Queen's Park Bureau
Of The Herald

The three essential voices in running the province today, aside from the public, are government, labor and the private sector.

In the deliberations which decide on the courses to be followed there has been one noticeable absentee — the private sector.

Government, of course, always has had a united voice, and labor, through its congresses, has been able to talk with some over-all and common approach.

But business has not had one central spokesman.

It has had the Canadian Manufacturers Association, which essentially is concerned with big enterprise.

It has had the Ontario Chamber of Commerce which historically has been a catch-all of small and medium sized business.

And then there have been groups such as John Bulloch's association for small businesses and a large number of industry, trade and business associations.

But there has been no organization which has spoken, and spoken with muscle, for the private sector.

HOW MUSCLE
It appears that now the Ontario Chamber of Commerce may be in the first stages of moving into this vacuum.

Over the years the Chamber has come in here annually and made a presentation. This has been pretty well a "nothing" thing. A lot of generalities presented by people with obviously very little muscle.

But the Chamber has been going through a resurgence.

Last spring at its annual meeting it had heavyweight speakers and a heavyweight audience.

Then a few days ago it was here for its annual presentation.

And what a difference from former years.

There possibly, in fact most probably has never been such a showing of brass in one group in these buildings.

The president of Shell Canada was there. So was the president of Dow Chemical. So was the chairman and chief executive officer of Inco.

In fact, of the more than 100 men in the delegation, nearly everyone in the delegation was a president, chairman, chief executive officer or senior vice-president.

And the presentation was impressive. Factual, tough and covering a broad spectrum.

NEED VOICE
If the Chamber is moving into a senior and responsible position, this is welcome.

Our major problems today are economic. In planning to meet them, industry's voice is needed.

Also the private sector needs to understand more about government, and a continuing contact with a central group can abet this.

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