

## Accounting fiasco: Is this any way to run a region?

Apparently incompetent financial accounting by staff members; apparently insufficient monitoring of staff functions by elected officials; outright refusal or reluctance among councillors to make public comment on the fiscal fiasco; a mysterious failure among councillors and administrators to publicize the belated signing of an official plan...

Is this any way to run a municipal government?

Halton regional government had been lumbering heavily but steadily down the highway toward a November election until it blew two tires late last month and veered crazily out of control.

It's difficult to say yet whether the vehicle has come safely to rest.

First, regional chairman Jack Raftis tells reporters at a special press conference (the only public access to information these days with most meetings being held behind closed doors) that a gross error had been made by Halton's treasury department: the \$365,000 surplus from 1979 had, in fact, turned into a \$69,000 deficit, leaving taxpayers to account for a \$435,000 loss.

Then further discrepancies were found in the books - the deficit stood to reach \$700,000.

Oh, and by the way, planning committee chairman Roy Booth had, our new official plan was signed last week.

The latter revelation carried an impact on reporters nearly as great as the jolt provided by the accounting fiasco. They had, after all, assembled at regional headquarters last month to snap pictures of housing minister Claude Bennett formally signing the elaborate document, only to see the ceremony abruptly abandoned when

concern over an Oakville development proposal got in the way.

Now it turns out the concern was just a misunderstanding and the plan was quickly and effortlessly endorsed at a private meeting in Toronto the week previous.

We can only speculate as to the real reasons why the regional plan's Big Day never came off as planned; Mr. Booth has offered only a pseudo-explanation, something about not wishing to upset council members absent from the signing August 1.

Nor, we regret, are he and his fellow councillors saying much about the accounting nightmare. Their two-hour, closed-door council meeting last week produced only one public statement: chief treasurer Don Farmer will be demoted within his own department.

Halton taxpayers - burned again - are not likely to cry out for blood, be it Don Farmer's or anyone else's. We do want some answers, though.

Are regional departments understaffed, as Farmer and others have indicated? If so, does this become a serious factor in their ability to function competently? Is budgetary restraint a worthwhile trade-off on staff competence? Should elected officials be regularly monitoring the region's fiscal health themselves, or should they always rely upon a civil servant's diagnosis? What effects will the \$700,000 deficit have upon next year's tax bills?

In our view, failure by elected councillors to answer such questions openly and thoroughly and thus reassure the public that things are under control again warrants their sound defeat at the polls this fall.



## Plan to reform cannabis laws recalls boy who cried wolf



### Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

Ottawa Bureau of The Herald

If Justice Minister Jean Chretien failed to generate much excitement when he announced that marijuana laws would be revised, it's not difficult to understand why.

We've been hearing the same story for eight years.

This time, given the government's majority position in Parliament, along with the public opinion that exists in the country, the changes might well be implemented. But you really can't blame people for being a bit skeptical.

It was just a few months ago that the Conservative government announced it would take a good close look at the unenforced marijuana laws that exist in Canada. And it was just 18 months ago that the previous Liberal government announced the same thing.

At that time, then Justice Minister

Marc Lalonde used those same familiar words to declare that the government intended to take a good close look at our marijuana laws. And if Lalonde thought he had heard this before, he was right. He uttered the same sentence in 1973 in his capacity as health minister.

#### STRONG REPORT

That was when the commission of inquiry into the non-medical use of drugs, headed by professor Gerald LeDain, handed in its fourth and final report - the most exhaustive study ever undertaken into drugs and the law in Canada - which strongly recommended a revision of the laws governing the simple possession of marijuana.

And before that, even without the benefit of the LeDain commission, there were frequent calls for an overhaul of Canada's drug laws.

Actually, Lalonde did make an effort to enact some of the LeDain recommendations. In 1974, he introduced a bill which would reduce the penalties associated with transferring cannabis offences from the Narcotic Control Act to the Food and Drug Act. The principal effect would be to replace prison sentences with fines.

The legislation did get through the Senate, where it was introduced, but it died in the House of Commons. Meanwhile, with Parliament obviously leaning toward more leniency, some of the courts took the cue and began

imposing tiny wrist-slap sentences. But other courts maintained a tough approach, leading to some ludicrous inconsistencies.

#### HIGH COST

It is frightening to think how much it is costing our present judicial system to charge the more than 35,000 people who come before the courts each year on marijuana-related charges. And since only about three per cent go to prison, and the vast majority are assessed only token fines, if not acquitted outright, the laws are not being treated with a great deal of respect.

What Chretien is reported to be considering is maintaining fairly stiff sentences for trafficking or importing, but regarding simple possession of a small amount as something akin to a minor traffic violation. Conviction would not lead to a criminal record.

At the moment, possession can bring on a maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment, and a \$2,000 fine. But since these sentences are never imposed, the law is being laughed at.

Every political party is in favor of bringing the possession penalties more in line with society's view of the offence. But then, every political party had been in favor of adopting O Canada as the national anthem, and we all know how long that took.

So it's little wonder that most people are adopting a wait-and-see attitude toward Chretien's recent announcement.

## Mutual trade barriers erected by Quebec, N.S. and Nfld.



### Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson

Queen's Park Bureau of The Herald

Those interested in determining whether Canada is one country or not should pay attention to one major underlying theme of the recent round of constitutional talks.

It was, as intergovernmental affairs minister Tom Wells put it in his opening statement, the "need to protect the integrity of the Canadian economic system."

"The common market from the Atlantic to the Pacific is one of the main benefits and advantages of our federation and should be one of its most fundamental achievements," he said.

In other words, capital, goods and labor should flow freely from any part of Canada to any other.

And unfortunately that is not happening nowadays.

Quebec in particular, but now Newfoundland and Nova Scotia as well, have abandoned the principle of

the free flow of labor.

#### NOT GOOD

Quebec, with its draconian language laws, forbids English-speaking Canadians to settle in that province unless their children abandon their language and culture within three years.

In addition, it operates a permit system for construction workers that bars eastern Ontarians working across the boundary, and a mineral exploration system that keeps out non-Quebecers.

Newfoundland gives preference to islanders for jobs in its off-shore oil industry, while Nova Scotia looks like it is going to give priority for all civil service jobs to local residents.

But these comparatively recent restrictions seem pale in comparison to tough restraints being put on inter-provincial trade, seven provincial governments already restricting government purchasing to locals.

British Columbia, for example, gives a 10 per cent price preference not to Canadian suppliers but to west coasters only.

#### TRUCKSTOO

Quebec goes further, practically excluding non-Quebec companies from such bidding, while several provinces require trucks delivering loads into their areas to return empty so they can't compete with local companies.

In fact, as Industry and Tourism

Minister Larry Grossman has quoted more than once, "there are now fewer barriers to trade among the countries of Europe than among the provinces of Canada."

Perhaps the most horrendous example is Alberta's Petroleum Marketing Commission's exclusion of Ontario-based Petrosar from its list of approved purchasers.

#### SHARE OIL

Equal access to Alberta's oil should be a prerequisite if this is one country (although Ontario doesn't help its case any by meddling in what the price of that oil should be).

For sound economic reasons (and a fear of Ontario's markets) Grossman wants dismantling of these barriers, but he admits that "looking beyond apparent provincial short-term self-interests is by no means an easy task."

As his own government knows well, it was Ontario that awarded a contract for subway cars to a Thunder Bay firm even when a Montreal company had the low bid for the contract.

With the existing minuscule industrial base in the northwest it was just not politically possible for the Ontario government to allow the contract and resulting jobs to go elsewhere.

And that's the crunch problem facing any constitutional remedy.

## Halton's History

From our files

**THIRTY YEARS AGO**-Town council was asked by the town employees for a raise in the wage rate from 88 cents an hour to 96 cents. No decision was made at the meeting, but a definite answer was promised by the end of the month. Jim Sargent was the spokesman for the five men. At present, the men work a 48-hour week, with straight pay for overtime and time-and-a-half on Sundays. They are not paid for time lost when sick and they have no insurance or hospitalization benefits.

Glen Williams will have complete two-party telephone service by early October. This news was announced by W.O. Misener, manager of the local Bell Telephone office. There has been a growing need for improved service in Glen Williams. Most business firms as well as a few private individuals, have put in two-party service but the large bulk of the population are still on rural lines.

Dr. B.J. O'Meara, dentist on the staff of Halton Health Unit last year, has been appointed director of the dental division of the provincial department of health in Prince Edward Island and resigned his position effective August 15.

**TWENTY YEARS AGO**-Disregarding a recommendation from Ontario Hydro to provide an annual remuneration to commissionaires, Acton Hydro Commission decided to give their services in administering hydro business free of charge for the year 1960 at least. This action was taken at their regular meeting.

Installation of two warning sirens as part of Halton's civil defence program was okayed by council last week. The sirens are planned to be at Wigglesworth and Kennedy, with the school board to be consulted as to exact location. Installation costs will be paid by the army.

The North Halton Association for Retarded Children is now planning a new school to serve Georgetown, Acton and Milton, and surrounding districts. Representatives of the Association from all areas have agreed on one good school centrally located to serve all three towns and areas would be an ideal arrangement.

If an ear of corn is any sample of Harold Gilmer's garden this year, this Union Street family will be well supplied in the vegetable department. Mr. Gilmer brought in an oddity for display in the Herald office window - a fully developed ear of corn, with four baby cobs growing from the same stalk, and all encased in one husk.

Prohibition of overhead hanging signs on Main Street stores is proving one of the thorniest problems for council in Georgetown's zoning bylaw. On Monday, a good portion of the council meeting was devoted to the question of the advertising sign erected by Barrager's Cleaners which does not conform with the bylaw.

A closely contested interclub match between Brampton and North Halton Golf and Country Clubs went to the local club Saturday by a shaky single point, 31½ to 30½.

Through the quick thinking of a mother and uncle, three children in the district narrowly escaped drowning Sunday when the boat they were in capsized. The girl, Suzanne Carriere, swam to shore, but Peter and Paul could not swim. Brian stayed to help them, but the two non-swimmers had a death-grip on Brian's neck when the mother and uncle reached them and brought them safely to shore. The mother is Mrs. Jerry Carriere and the uncle is Ted Carriere.

**TEN YEARS AGO**-A plan for Highway 7 to by-pass Georgetown in ten years' time is in the talking and planning stage. The plan, first broached by the provincial highways department three years ago, took more definite form last week with signing of an agreement between the province and the municipality, calling for a functional planning study, including land and construction costs.

Miss Gertrude Fatt, a Georgetown high school teacher in the thirties has a top \$20,500 job as acting superintendent of special services for the Toronto board of education. She has just been promoted from assistant superintendent of secondary schools to the most senior job in education held by a woman in Canada.

Nobelen's Pharaoh, a Doberman Pinscher owned and bred by Mr. and Mrs. Barry James of Georgetown, entered his first show recently in London, Ontario. He is 7½ months old. Starting with his win in the junior puppy class he went on to take Best of Winners, then Best Canadian Bred Doberman, then on to the group showing. There, under Judge Shirley DeBoer's trained eye, he won the trophy for Best Canadian Bred Puppy in Group.

A fire call Monday night could have been disastrous. However, flames licking from under a loaded Shell gasoline tanker were doused before they developed into big trouble. The driver of the tanker, including a pup which was also loaded, wheeled his rig off the 7th Line of Esquewaug at Hicken's service station after he noticed flames and smoke in his rear view mirror, coming from one set of wheels. He emptied a chemical extinguisher on the wheels, killing the flames and called Georgetown firefighters, who used water to cool down the red hot wheel assembly.

The second annual Little NHL Hockey Hall of Fame dinner has been cancelled until further notice. Founder Gordon Alcott told The Herald Tuesday morning that the dinner won't be held August 31 as planned because the main attraction, Bobby Orr, of the Boston Bruins, can't make it. General Motors, who has a contract with the Bruins superstar, has arranged for commercials to be made out west during the week of the dinner.

**ONE YEAR AGO**-S.B. McLaughlin Associates Ltd. is presenting would-be investors with a rosy forecast for its proposed 1,700-home development in Georgetown in order to boost its stocks. G.M. Ross Knechtel has charged. The Ward 1 councillor based his charge on a report by a Bay Street publisher in which Bruce McLaughlin is quoted indirectly predicting "a favorable decision" from town council regarding the massive development project.

Town council has endorsed retaining Keith Wagland and Associates for architectural services related to the new theatre-library-arts complex proposed for construction on the site of the Georgetown Public Library. According to a proposed schedule for the \$1.5 million project, construction should begin late next spring to transform the historic Church Street building housing the library into a sprawling two-storey cultural facility.

Halton regional council will keep the Georgetown landfill site open until the end of October, adding another \$200,000 to the operating budget for the site, if a public works committee recommendation is accepted today (Wednesday).



### Letter from the Editor

Paul Dorsey

## Alcott's young stars promise fireworks

He sauntered pensively into position, leaned way back, swung hard - and served the tennis ball with a sharp snap into the net. A picture of relief on the far side of the court, I chuckled to myself and took a few steps forward.

The second serve came slower and higher, but

even as the ball dropped steeply into my court, I knew I was in trouble. Spinning wildly, the ball jumped off the ground to my left and veered toward my head. I caught it full in the face.

The fierce slice serve described above belongs to one Gord Dolg. Convinced sports editor Mark Clairmont invited Gord onto the Alcott court recently as his stand-in while he limped off to massage his recurring (and conveniently) painful knee.

No problem, I thought: the kid's smaller than me and probably ten years younger (read: ten years less experienced) and my four seasons of intermittent, casual play had earned me a reasonable forehead and a good serve. (The Association of Tennis Hackers computer ranks me Number 14,015 following back-to-back wins over Miss Elita Rhodes of Thornhill, age 94, and Charles Shulz' Snoopy, a beagle pup.)

I served first, winning confidently with my favorite shot: the Fluke.

Then Gord came to bat with this crazy sidespin. I'm used to topspin, but those slices cut my game to ribbons. Even when I got the racket face in front of the ball instead of my own, his serves went careening off into the next court.

"Ball, please!"

Well, to cut a long (20-minute) story (and my tennis career) short, Gord somehow managed to narrowly edge me out 6-0. I cheerfully obliged him with a couple of dozen unforced errors, which I'd been practising for years.

Ever one to glimpse the silver lining, though, I realized that Gord's talented presence on a Halton Hills court provides evidence of the town's (and Canada's) future tennis potential. If Gord's skill is indicative of the quality of tennis among local young people (witness the admirable success of Stacey Hurley and, to a slightly lesser extent, David Bew) then area fans can expect great things ahead for both the national and international tennis circuits.

And since the town is clearly lending much support (facility-wise) to local soccer leagues, one can only surmise that tomorrow's stars are now playing among the popular junior teams right here in Halton Hills.

Something to look forward to, and something to enjoy now in its developmental stage.

## the HERALD

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