

Regional council finds a scapegoat

The term "scapegoat" is not a pretty one, bringing to mind images of corruption and buck-passing and seemingly inevitable cover-ups within the ranks.

But Halton regional council seems to have found its scapegoat - and thus to have somehow "purged" itself of guilt-by-association - by seeking and obtaining the resignation of Halton's first and only chief administrative officer (CAO), Ernie Reid.

It is an easy decision to rationalize: as chief-of-staff and general supervisor of all things regional, Mr. Reid probably should have known that things had gone amiss in the region's treasury department, so far out of kilter that some \$600,000 had been penned into the accounts where blank spaces should have been.

The demotion of regional treasurer Don Farmer was an obvious step for council to take, representing not so much punishment for making the error as careful reprimand for failing to handle the huge responsibility of his job.

But if Don Farmer's boss - Ernie Reid - needs to be fired or otherwise forced to depart, council must be basing its moves on information not yet and probably never to be publicly released. There can be no other fair and justifiable reason to dismiss a staff member who was virtually every bit as removed from the "scene of the crime" as Halton's 24 councillors.

As we've suggested here before, no Halton taxpayer is crying for blood, only explanations. A full public account of the debacle and how it came about has yet to be offered by regional council or staff, only

vague speculation and a few related details about mistaken entries and human error. Mr. Reid's apparently solicited resignation last week sadly ended 37 years of near flawless civil service to Fort William, Thunder Bay and Halton region. His six-year old job in Halton's top civic spot was marred only by his lengthy absence last year when he was recuperating from foot troubles.

For area reporters, through whom the public obtained its only real and lasting glimpse of the man, Mr. Reid was a competent CAO who went to great lengths preparing his reports for council and the press and who invariably provided plenty of information unless specifically pressured to the contrary by his more vote-conscious superiors.

Mr. Reid was often assailed in the council chamber for what elected officials perceived as his professional shortcomings - a delayed report, a confusing recommendation - but the CAO always emerged coolly and confidently as a man who knew in his own heart he was doing his job properly.

Halton voters who maintain at least a passing trust in regional council will doubtless breathe a sigh of relief to read of the CAO's resignation, but we are not so assured of council's latest move. The guilty party in this deficit fiasco has not been found; a long and respectable career has merely been tainted indelibly and a public servant has been sent into early retirement - a limbo of sorts - because he was in the line of fire between the voters and the politicians.



Letter from the Editor

Paul Dorsey

Y'all come back, now

The Herald's grand Open House Thursday afternoon was the "culmination" we'd all hoped for. The unexpectedly large turn-out at 45 Guelph St. in Georgetown assured us that our popularity in the community continues to rise, an important factor in our efforts that we not only appreciate deeply but intend to pursue to the fullest extent.

Apart from our own tidying and preparation and the production of a large, economy-size invitation for one and all (last week's special supplement), the Open House was a big success thanks to contributions by a lot of people.

Special thanks to go to four Georgetown businesses for making the whole affair a very pleasurable experience. Dave Kenner of the Dairy Bar catered the event, McDonald's Restaurant provided soft drinks, Earl Ryder of Ryder's TV loaned a stereo system and Bob Treble's Flower Connection added much to the building's appearance with a number of lovely floral decorations.

Our sincere thanks to the various dignitaries - advertisers, businessmen, politicians, former Herald employees - who accepted our special invitations to attend. Among them were Halton MP Otto Jelinek, Halton-Durham MPP Julian Reed, Judy Kennerly (sponsoring for the mayor), councillors Terry Grubbe, Ross Knechtel, Russ Miller and Marilyn Serjeantson, former Herald editors Bob Butler and Terry Harley, ex-staffers Maggie Hannah, George Evashuk, Richard Petrashek and Val Caruso.

Another very special guest was, of course, former Herald editor and publisher and now town councillor Walter Blehn, who, as usual, kept many guests amused with anecdotes from the days when Herald reporters could compile a lengthy column on "holiday visitors" simply by driving around Georgetown and spotting strange cars in residents' driveways.

My, how we've changed! Our thanks, as well, to the dozens of others who dropped by to tour the building and say hello; I'm sure most if not all were as impressed with the new facility as we are proud. I'd like to single out Dwayne Rivers, who came by to offer the best wishes of the Toronto Star's Oakville (Halton) bureau.

Reporter Lori Taylor and I would express a special thanks to Claudette Smith of the Cancer Society's local unit, who brought with her two T-shirts and buttons bearing the "Terry Fox Marathon of Hope" logos in appreciation of our recent coverage. T-shirts or not, Terry deserved every headline, photo and bit of type we could afford.

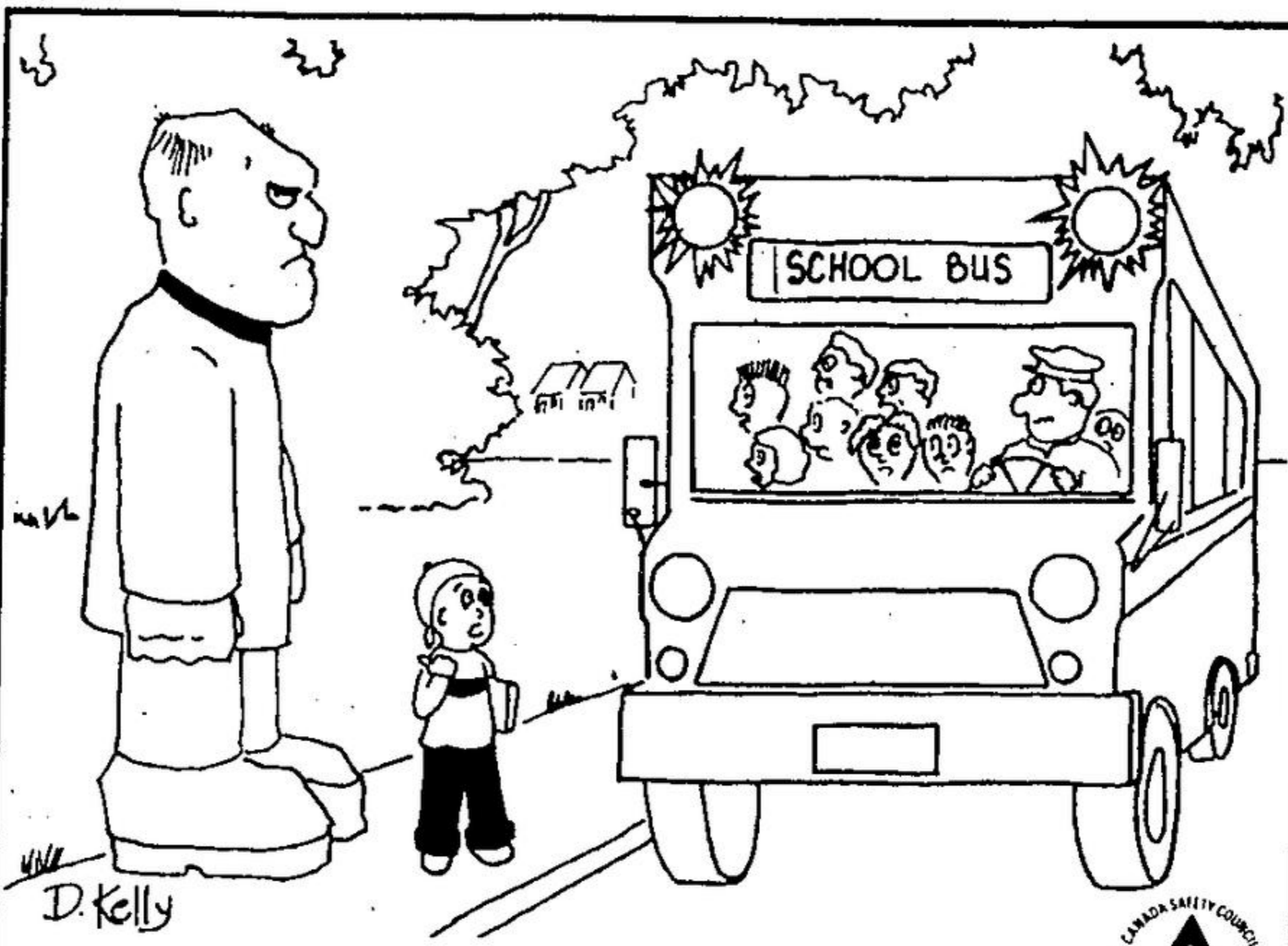
And, last but not least, I'd personally like to thank the young lady who was introduced to me as a "fan", thus making my day while simultaneously making the whole week grind all worthwhile. I mention her, in particular, so I can correct an answer I gave to one of her questions; an aspiring journalist, she asked what "chequebook journalism" is.

Having had no personal knowledge of the phenomenon, I suggested it's a matter of reporters taking bribes or other "perks" to editorially influence a forthcoming story. Upon further reflection, however, the term's true meaning came to me later: it is, of course, a matter of newsmen paying their contacts for information. (I've never had to do that either.)

I would, however, like to "bribe" some more folks to come by The Herald sometime at their convenience (preferably not during the Monday-Tuesday production period) and tour the facility. We'd like everyone who couldn't make the Open House to drop by when they're free and look around. We'll make the visit worth your while with a warm reception and a guided tour.



Four "generations" of Herald editors assembled for a photo at the paper's Open House Thursday. They are (left to right) Bob Butler, who is now District Editor at the Guelph Daily Mercury; Walter Blehn, who also published The Herald for many years and is now a town councillor, among other interests; Terry Harley, now a freelance reporter for an Owen Sound radio station; and current Herald editor Paul Dorsey.



School Bus Safety Week - September 24-30

'But I need him for Show-and-Tell today!'

Constitution commercials cost us a 'vague' \$6 million



Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

Ottawa Bureau of The Herald

The federal government steadfastly maintains that those television advertisements about the constitution are entirely non-partisan, that they are not intended to promote any particular viewpoint and that they have nothing to do with any possible unilateral action by Ottawa.

"We're not trying to promote a particular point of view and that's why we are trying to stay away from detail," says a spokesman for the government's Unity Office.

It makes one wonder why the government decided to spend \$6 million on a TV and newspaper advertising campaign, doesn't it? If it's reasonable to spend that kind of money in not promoting any particular viewpoint, it's mind-boggling to consider what might be spent on actually promoting a specific idea.

As you may have noticed, the government decided to cancel part of that \$6 million program - the part that was to go in newspapers - because such ads would require too many specifics.

"On radio and television," explains a Unity Office spokesperson, "you can make suggestions with a clever phrase but in print there has to be specifics."

And Heaven forbid that we become specific.

NO CONNECTION
The federal spokesmen deny all suggestions that the cancellation of the newspaper ads had anything to do with provincial complaints or counter-offensives. Not at all. The fact that Quebec now has decided to spend up to \$600,000 countering the Ottawa ads, and the fact that there are similar threatening noises from Alberta, has nothing to do with the cancellation, they say.

What the federal spokesmen would like us to believe is that their ads have nothing to do with the current constitutional impasse, that they are mere motherhood messages, designed to get us humming O Canada while we watch Canada Geese fly overhead. How cynical of us to suggest that there are ulterior motives.

I certainly don't want to encourage this cynicism, but it strikes me as a colossal coincidence that after the country has gone 113 years without constitutional advertisements that they would suddenly appear just after Prime Minister Trudeau has hinted at possible unilateral federal initiatives in this field. But perhaps a few of Trudeau's boys were sitting around one day, sharing a friendly beer or two, when one of them proclaimed: "Hey, we have this \$6 million in my bottom drawer, let's initiate a constitutional ad campaign without any particular point of view."

"What an absolutely sterling suggestion," another might say. "Let's get Canadians thinking about the constitution while they're doing their Participation walk."

NOT NEEDED
Frankly, I doubt whether there were such conversations, particularly in view of the public opinion polls which showed that most Canadians were already convinced that a Canadian constitution is a good thing. One of the polls indicated that 78 per cent of us think that Canada should have its own constitution, that 91 per cent of us say a constitution should guarantee basic human rights, that 74 per cent want to retain the parliamentary system of government, and that 81 per cent support the right to education in the second official language.

This wouldn't suggest to me that the government must spend \$6 million just to get us thinking about a made-in-Canada constitution. And it's clear that most provinces don't want the ads, otherwise there wouldn't be plans for counter ads.

If the ads are not designed to promote some viewpoint, or prepare groundwork for some particular action, why not make them a federal-provincial project and share the cost? The provinces can scarcely be accused of being anti-constitutional.

But no, the federal government has decided to go it alone, smack in the middle of the most delicate constitutional negotiations in our history, and even as some provinces talk of expensive counter-offensives, we are being told that the Ottawa campaign is all in the name of non-partisan unity. Sorry, I just can't buy that.

Pensions Commission tries to define 'adequate' income



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson

Queen's Park Bureau of The Herald

To pay for the needs of today's senior citizens requires roughly three working taxpayers for every retiree, and even with these proportions many people complain the elderly are suffering financial neglect.

Yet in 50 years the province will have barely two people of working age for every person aged 65 or older. Worse, from a money viewpoint, is that the average age of senior citizens at that time will likely be much higher than it is today, as the very old are becoming an increasing percentage of the senior citizen bloc.

And that group is precisely those who make the heaviest demands upon the increasingly expensive health care system.

That is also why, of the half-dozen or so commissions, inquiries, and committees the Ontario government has on the go at the moment, the most important without question is the one looking at the Status of Pensions.

The commission's mandate is to evaluate the effectiveness of pension plans in terms of "present social and economic circumstances."

ONE PARTY
True, that is only one aspect of the financial demands to come with an increasingly aged population, but adequate pensions are probably the

bottom line for a dignified retirement.

In addition the pension commission conclusions, whatever they are, together with analysis from other agencies and levels of government, must form the groundwork for major political decisions about an aging society that must be made in the coming two decades.

Hopefully the Ontario commission, whose report may be out by October, will not produce a narrow, technical document that will be filed and forgotten.

The commission heard 360 briefs in 15 weeks of hearings across the province, and from these it is apparent (to quote Treasurer Frank Miller) that three areas pose major threats to senior citizen income security.

NO INDEXING
One is inflation, in Miller's words the "topic addressed most often throughout the hearings."

Unlike the Old Age Pension and the Canada Pension Plan almost all private plans lack an indexing feature that would increase their benefits to keep pace with the rate of inflation.

(This is because the plans are financially sound - "fully funded" - unlike the CPP which is going to need massive tax increases to keep it going next decade, or the Old Age Pension which comes out of general revenue.)

The other two complaints involve bias in the system in favor of career male employees as opposed to women, or those who switch jobs frequently, or those on low incomes.

GOOD LIVING
Whether in fact private pension plans can even survive into the next century in their present form is doubtful, and one aspect the commission hopefully looks at closely.

One severe problem any analysis of senior citizen needs faces, of course, is the lack of agreed definition of what

an adequate income or standard of living is for a senior.

It is, to quote Miller again, a subjective decision.

Once it is made, however, the other side of the coin flips up again - how to pay for whatever is recommended to enhance a person's life beyond age 65.

The commission's observations in that regard will be very interesting, given the changing nature of society and the prediction of a relative decline in the number of working people.

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WILLIAM EVDOKIMOFF, Publisher & General Manager
PAUL DORSEY, Managing Editor
DAVID BEATTIE, Advertising Manager

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Halton's History

From our files

THIRTY YEARS AGO - All town employees were given a five per cent raise in pay retroactive to August 1 at a special meeting of town council last night. The town men had appeared at a council meeting on August 15 requesting that their wage rate be raised from 88 cents an hour to 98 cents an hour to put wages on a par with those paid by industry in town.

While Georgetown can consider itself fortunate compared with some other municipalities which have been seriously affected by the nation-wide railway strike, one serious blow has fallen. Last Thursday, the coating and color rooms at Alliance Paper Mills Ltd. were forced to close for an indefinite period. The departments at the mill employ some 50 of the plant's 150 workers. Primary reason for the shutdown is lack of clay, all of which is shipped in by rail from Georgia.

While visiting in town with Mr. and Mrs. Sol Dewhurst, Mrs. E.E. Young left a copy of the Detroit Free Press, featuring on the front page an excellent picture of the massed pipe bands at the St. Andrew's Day celebration held in that city recently. A member of the local girls' pipe band, Mr. Michael George, could be seen clearly in the foreground.

TWENTY YEARS AGO - A small surplus is anticipated for the year-end in the town budget, finance chairman Reeve Doug Sargent announced. Reviewing a statement prepared by town auditor Walter Pope for the first six months of the year, Reeve Sargent told council Monday that an apparent surplus is shown, if all departments continue to operate as close to the line as they have done to date.

Jimmy Crawford, 5 son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Crawford, was the hero of a kitchen incident Monday which started when Mrs. Crawford removed a cake from her oven with a tea towel. As she lifted the cake, a corner of the towel touched an element and started to smoulder. Unaware of the danger, Mrs. Crawford hung the towel on the rack where it started to flare up. Jimmy grabbed the burning towel from the rack, threw it into the kitchen sink and turned the water on, averting a possible serious fire.

Georgetown television viewers watched the popular panel show, "The Price is Right", with more than casual interest for two days last week when Knox Presbyterian minister Rev. Alex Calder won and lost the show's profitable championship while vacationing in New York. Mr. Calder won prizes valued at \$1,821 in his first appearance on the show, but went winless for the second show, relinquishing his title to a housewife, Mrs. R. Meredith, from Nebraska.

A souvenir from Hornby's past was uncovered recently when Earl McDowell was tearing out the partitions in his barn to build a new stable. Mr. McDowell found an empty bottle with Brain's Brewery, Hornby, imprinted on it. The bottle is of clear glass, a little larger than the one in use today. It has a glass stopper in it, held in place with wire.

"Georgetown's weed problem is the worst in the country," County Weed Inspector V.E. McArthur said last week after touring the town with local weed inspector William Walker. "Georgetown has much more than its share of idle land and it's becoming heavily infested with weeds, especially wild carrot and ragweed."

About 820 members of the Georgetown Junior Fire brigade turned out Saturday for a swimming party at the Community Swimming Pool. The party was organized by the firefighters to entertain members of the junior brigade and to encourage other children to join. Some 220 new signatures were added to the list of Junior firemen.

Remembrance Park is the name chosen for Georgetown's new park where the war memorial has recently been re-located. Credit for the name goes to Roger Smith, 11, of Chapel Street.

What their followers knew all along became official Tuesday night when the Glen Girls Ball team won the honor as the best girls' club in the county. Playing at Hornby park with the best of five series tied at two games a piece, the Glen put together good strength at the plate with a fine pitching performance by Betty Stafford to bomb the Palermo girls 15 to 6.

TEN YEARS AGO - Arson charges were laid as a result of an investigation by the OPP into the barn fire Sunday night at the Beauregard Farm owned by Theresa St. Jean on Main Street South. A Georgetown man appeared in court Monday and was remanded for 60 days' psychiatric examination. The fire, which lit up the sky and could be seen all over town, completely destroyed the barn, containing a cold storage unit filled with apples, crates, baskets, tools, grading equipment and farm implements. The rest of the barn was filled with newly picked apples. Miss St. Jean estimates her loss at \$50,000.

Clearing of the brush has begun on 64 acres of land in Esquew where a Georgetown man, Denis Scallen, proposes to donate land for bungalows for senior citizens with no families and orphans. The Marian foundation would be the beneficiary and builder. The land located adjacent to the Canadian Environmental Systems building on the Fifth Line, Esquew, just south of Highway 7, will be known as Marian Park.

Sketch plans for Georgetown's second separate school, the St. Francis of Assisi school to be built in the Sinclair Road-Duncan Drive area, were formally approved last week by the Halton County Roman Catholic School Board. Tenders for its construction will probably be called by January or early spring.

The Grady family are back in their Glen Williams home after an absence of two and a half years. Mr. J.C. Grady, a consulting photo-geologist, was on a special assignment with a United Nations surveying crew in India. Mrs. Grady and their children - Susan, 15, Sylvia, 12, and Brian, 8, accompanied him and they made their home in Madras during his term of service.

Salary schedule increases for top education officials were made public at last week's board meeting in Oakville. The board has followed federal government guidelines and restricted increases to six per cent, according to director of education J.W. Singleton.

A strike by local 527, Plumbers and Steamfitters, a Kitchener-Guelph plant, is causing concern at Joseph Gibbons School. The washrooms are not completed, and in the words of principal Logan MacDonald, "How do you open a school without washrooms?"

ONE YEAR AGO - Although the sale of Acton's Diaston saw plant has fallen through, the fate of the factory's 130 employees is still unsettled. Goran Sorman, organization and business development officer for Diaston Canada Inc. confirmed Monday that the proposed sale of the Acton and Vancouver plants to R. Hoe and Co. Inc. of Scarborough, New York, has been cancelled. Mr. Sorman said the company still plans to sell the factories, but would not elaborate further.

The taxpayers of Halton Hills should be made fully aware of how much money vandalism is costing them locally, according to Coun. Marilyn Serjeantson. The results of vandalism are "more obvious to the public" these days, town engineer Bob Austin told the general committee Monday night in response to Coun. Serjeantson's questioning. He was unable to say whether vandalism is on the increase, however, and was asked to prepare a report on the problem.