

The moral crime of 'Junior Miss'

Six months ago, after the announcement that a "Junior Miss Halton Hills" competition would join the Georgetown Fall Fair agenda and after a tidal wave of pro and con letters to the editor had illustrated a distinct rift in the community, it was suggested in these pages that the fair board should drop the event after its initial run.

That suggestion - which seems far too diplomatic in hindsight - was prompted by genuine appreciation for the enthusiasm and vigor of Jim and Rita Barrett, who'd moved to town not long before, but quickly accepted and became accepted in their new community. They approached the fair board with an idea already tested and successful in their own hometown and in hundreds of other communities: "kids say the darndest things" - style competition for three to five year old girls and a beauty contest for babies up to one year old.

In the months since these events transpired with only modest success, a substantial amount of documented evidence has been brought to our attention indicating that the last thing parents should involve their children in is pre-school competition. More and more bodies of authority are accepting this evidence, and now Ontario's ministry of education is studying a recommendation to end all school competition involving children nine and under.

Opponents of the Junior Miss pageant and the baby contest have challenged the former for its sexism (since only little girls are involved), its promotion of role stereotypes (since, despite what organizers now insist, initial publicity about the contest suggested that appearance had a great deal to do with the judging) and its exploitation of youngsters.

The pageant's defenders, for the most part, have seized upon these less significant aspects and have interpreted any criticism in the narrowest fashion. Many still believe that opponents of the contest simply abhor competition at all ages.

It just isn't true, of course, but to compound the unfortunate circumstances that anchor this whole episode like a ball and chain, Toronto Star columnist Michele Landsberg last week rallied against the fair board's liability (and to some extent - unwillingness) to understand and accept what has already been endorsed by the United Nations and other agencies worthy of our emulation.

As accurate as Ms. Landsberg's attack was, her column (March 18) failed to acknowledge some positive traits which the fair board maintains, and that disturbs us. Like the controversy itself, her column lacked the perspective necessary to promote understanding.

The fair board is a long-standing group of volunteers worthy of our respect and admiration - and our concern in view of

the financial troubles dogging the fall fair. Those troubles were no doubt foremost in the board members' minds when they recruited the Barretts to run two new events at the fair: "little miss" competitions have run successfully for years both in the Barretts' New Brunswick hometown and, closer to home, in Burlington.

But as "Innocent" and community-minded as the fair board was in launching the event - even in renewing it for the 1981 fair - its members must now recognize the moral crime they are committing by having youngsters, regardless of their gender and their willingness to participate, judged against each other. All arguments about sexism and exploitation aside, it is indeed morally indefensible to select one child from among her peers on the basis of her "superior showing" under any criteria.

We hope the Little Miss episode will evolve into a lesson in community awareness if the fair board changes its plans. For now, however, no one in town stands in a favorable light.

We condemn the board - and particularly its entertainment committee - for refusing to read through the scholarly material documenting the dangers of pre-school competition. Columnist Landsberg was quite correct in noting board members' reluctance to hear the evidence, and what little argument they did hear during a recent meeting was largely misunderstood.

We condemn the board for virtually refusing to consider alternative children's events suggested by the pageant's opponents. A wide range of non-competitive events would allow pre-schoolers to display their talents and interests for adult "judges" whose responsibility would be to encourage such self-expression through positive praise for each specific undertaking, rather than to demonstrate distinctions between youngsters of such a tender, impressionable age.

We question the mutual unwillingness to compromise and co-operate displayed by the fair board and the contest's opponents. The latter group says it will help run the alternative activities it suggested, but only if Little Miss Halton Hills says goodbye forever; we can only take heart in the group's tentative hopes of running such events in conjunction with one of the other annual community celebrations. But frankly, we hope they'll reconsider joining the board before next fall as voting members, and at least try out the board's homespun style of democracy in their bid to stop the contests.

The operative word throughout this controversy has been "unfortunate". It would be discouraging for board members and disconcerting for would-be participants if Junior Miss '81 is cancelled, but if the feelings of some adults in town are all that is damaged, we feel the issue will have been adequately resolved.



Effects of the Gallup polls: would Clark sleep easier?



Ottawa Report

By Stewart MacLeod

Ottawa Bureau of The Herald

Since timing is so crucial in politics, it's tempting to speculate on what might have happened to Joe Clark's leadership at the recent Tory convention if the latest Gallup Poll had been available at that time.

I suspect he would be much safer in his job today.

As things stand, Clark's future as party leader is clouded in doubt after one-third of the delegates voted to hold a leadership convention. While two-thirds support would represent an overwhelming victory in an election, it is not a clear-cut vote of confidence in an internal survey of party leadership.

There appeared to be a general consensus prior to the convention that if the leadership review was supported by fewer than 30 per cent of the delegates Clark could survive easily. But anything over 30 per cent would

create obvious difficulties.

The 41-year-old former prime minister now faces those difficulties and, in order to clear the air, he will probably find it necessary to call for a leadership convention within the next year. The only thing that could possibly save the leader, say many party members, is a dramatic turnaround in the public opinion polls.

NO HELP

Clark certainly didn't get much help from Dr. Gallup prior to the convention. While he was trying to convince the party faithful that his diligent campaign against the government's constitutional proposal was beginning to gather steam, the pre-convention Gallup Poll showed that the Conservatives were standing still in the public's esteem. The poll, taken in January and released in February, showed that in a one-month period Liberal popularity had dipped sharply to 40 per cent, from a December figure of 44 per cent. But in the same period the Tory level remained unchanged at 34 per cent.

However, the New Democrats, who support the Trudeau constitutional package, soared up to 23 per cent from 20 per cent.

Regardless of how one tried to interpret the results, it was difficult to use them in conjunction with Clark's argument that he was winning wide support for his constitutional stance. And while I am not sure just how much

influence these polls bring to bear on a political convention, this one certainly didn't help Clark. At a time like that, standing still isn't good enough.

TOO LATE

But if the convention were being held this week the polls might be just good enough to save Clark from the agony he now faces. The latest survey showed that, in a poll conducted during February, the Tory standing jumped sharply to 37 per cent from 34. And the New Democrats fell back to only 19 per cent from the month-earlier level of 23 per cent.

Since the Liberals rose to 42 per cent from the January level of 40 per cent, it's obvious that the constitution is not the only issue in the minds of voters. If it were, the Liberals and New Democrats could be expected to rise and fall in tandem. Instead, it was the Liberals and Tories who rose together, although the Tory increase was greater.

Regardless of the reasons the 1,000 respondents had for giving Clark a boost this month instead of last month, there is no doubt that he was hurt by the timing. Had he been able to enter that convention with his party's popularity up three percentage points on Dr. Gallup's scale, he might very well have kept the leadership review votes below 30 per cent.

And if that had happened, he would have nothing on his mind now except the next general election.

Premier's election techniques suggest he's not so true blue



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson

Queen's Park Bureau of The Herald

A story is told of why we just had an election in March instead of a decent month like May of Jonathan and Premier William Davis has two family commitments those months, a son and a daughter getting married, and he didn't want the weddings taking place during the hothouse atmosphere of a campaign.

The story may or may not be true, but it does fit with the image of Davis as one who acquires while covering Queen's Park as a reporter. He actually seems to believe in the old conservative virtues symbolized by family, the Queen, the Lord's Prayer, public service.

But those "personal" beliefs are only half his political truth. Davis is often labelled a "red Tory," which is another way of saying he is a Conservative without political principles, or, perhaps, with the single principle of staying in power.

This past election, with its huge doses of vote-buying dollars pumped into every town in Ontario, and the BILD promises of massive public sector expansion, was a perfect example.

MORE CASH

That the government was \$1 billion short of cash already before the election doesn't matter much - there is an election to be won.

Two legislative incidents strike me as having illustrated the twin factors of Davis' political nature.

When the Toronto Board of Education tried to make optional the Lord's Prayer in schools because it is incom-

patible with a multicultural society (which it is), he bluntly ordered them in desist.

Yet when propagandists smeared the useful chemical 2,4,5-T as unsafe, and the environment ministry fought back, Davis ordered it to surrender solely to relieve the political heat.

DAVIS CLONES

There was another factor in this election that hurt the opposition. The Tories call it "leadership", which is why their candidates were all running like they did in 1971) as Davis clones rather than Conservatives.

But it would be more accurate to suggest that Davis looks like an Ontario premier - in stature, style, personality and speech - than either Liberal Leader Stuart Smith or NDP Leader Michael Cassidy.

The technique was remarkably

simple once again, and included references to home-town Brampton, a few joking jibes at local personality addressed by his or her first name, and perhaps a little toying with the press.

The audience relaxes, relaxes, and feels good, while around the one-liners, Davis wraps the body of the message. The punishing hours he's putting in on the campaign trail this election indicates the Tories think he sells in person. They're probably right. This isn't 1975, when he was perceived as arrogant and distant.

The general opinion is that Davis is bland, which puzzles me, since I've more often found him inscrutable. He never answers questions straight. Ask about homosexuality and he lectures on that great institution of the family. Provoked on being a Pierre Trudeau lap-dog, he talks about the Queen.

Letter to the editor

Gangsters! A voter's dilemma

To the editor of The Herald: It Does Not Matter For Who You Vote, As Long As You Vote!

Dilemma Of A Voter!

On March 16, I attended the all candidates meeting at Georgetown High School. I came home at 11 p.m. and went to bed. Then a replay took place.

First, Fran Baines, local P.C. candidate. All I heard was programs here, programs there, programs everywhere: at whose expense? I know what chairman Pierre and commissar LaLonde are doing on a federal scale. So I put Julian Reed into my mental filing cabinet as Machine Gun Kelly.

guous political jargon for the plain English word "heft".

I put Fran Baines and her leader, Bill Davis, into my mental filing cabinet as Bonnie and Clyde. I could not possibly vote for Bonnie, for she is out to destroy me.

But all is not lost. I still have Julian Reed, local Liberal. All I heard was programs here, programs there, programs everywhere: at whose expense? I know what chairman Pierre and commissar LaLonde are doing on a federal scale. So I put Julian Reed into my mental filing cabinet as Machine Gun Kelly.

Pardon me, I broke the law. Regardless of talent, we have to have Canadian content. Make it Al Karpis. I could not possibly vote for Al Karpis, as he is out to destroy me.

But there is my last and only savior, Chris Cutler. 20 years old. Young, full of energy. Very effective speaker. An array of credentials. Director here, director there, director everywhere. I heard concrete proposals here, concrete proposals there, concrete proposals everywhere. At whose expense? I will be drowning in taxes,

and soon be wearing concrete boots. So I put him into my mental filing cabinet as Baby Face Nelson. I could not possibly vote for Baby Face Nelson, for he is out to destroy me.

I turned for spiritual guidance. Dear God, please help me make the right choice: gas chamber, electric chair, or rope.

I then drifted into sleep at 2 a.m., for I have to rise at 4:20 a.m. to go to work, for I have to pay taxes and taxes and taxes.....

G. Hagensen, 20 Mackenzie Drive, Georgetown.

Halton's History

From our files

THIRTY YEARS AGO-"The Wizard of Oz", starring Judy Garland, headlined this week's films at the Roxy. Other films to appear this week include "Two Weeks in Love", starring Jane Powell and Ricardo Montalban, and "Destination Moon" in technicolor.

Leslie Clark was elected president of the region this week in their annual executive meeting. He replaces past president David Bowman.

Georgetown may be in the running for a Senior "B" hockey club, it was revealed this week when Ken McMillan and Bob Lane presented their case to the OHA on behalf of the Raiders. They claim the Raiders are in the hole financially because of the OHA's request that they play their home games earlier than usual.

The early season games attracted few fans and wore the team down quickly. As a result, they were ousted from the playoffs three straight by Milton. Georgetown officials are confident that the Raiders could be competitive in the higher calibre league.

TWENTY YEARS AGO-The North Halton Builders' Association last week passed a resolution urging the federal government to make a maximum of 25 home mortgages available to all qualified builders. The objective of the mortgage plan is to reduce unemployment and to stimulate winter works at a more productive level.

Georgetown Golf Club's second nine holes will be playable by June. The wooded back nine will make the course one of the most scenic and difficult courses in the province.

Danny and the Juniors played to a capacity crowd at the Club Midtown last week. The popular recording group sang their greatest hits, including "At the Hop", "Twistin' U.S.A." and "Rock and Roll is Here to Stay". The group performed for two hours and were welcomed by Mayor Ern Hyde and Reeve Doug Sargent.

From our classified ads: Wigo TV offers a 17-inch television set for \$32.50. If you wanted to go in style with a 21-inch, it cost you an outlandish \$44.95.

TEN YEARS AGO-The provincial government has awarded Halton county schools a \$3.6 million increase in their budget. Halton is only one of two areas that will receive aid, while five other counties in Ontario will have cuts in their allowances.

OHA Jr. "A" scoring star Marcel Dionne will be attending this year's Banham tournament. Dionne will perform the task of dropping the puck for the start of the championship game. The young St. Catharines star played in the tournament in 1965. He is expected to be drafted early in next year's junior draft.

It'll cost motorists more to park their cars on Main Street, starting this week. The old penny meters have been replaced by new nickel and dime meters. Councillor Ern Hyde opposed the fee increase, saying it was "too high".

Halton county's secondary school teachers are 98 per cent opposed to the introduction of a new unemployment insurance plan. Georgetown High School teacher Tom Ramnautsing called the proposed plan "deceitful". Mr. Ramnautsing said that the proposal doesn't tell people that they will be taxed an additional amount for the plan.

Time left to help our Red Cross

There is probably no citizen of Ontario whose life hasn't been touched - in some beneficial way - by the services of the Red Cross Society. Red Cross helps people of all ages, in all walks of life.

The Red Cross Blood Donor and Transfusion services maintain the most efficient free donor system in the world. Red Cross teaches kids to swim - and trains the instructors who show them how. They're there providing help in emergencies - from hotel fires to floods, earthquakes and other natural and man-made disasters. Red Cross helps seniors live happier lives - traces and locates people to reunite them with their families. They teach first aid and water safety and have ongoing programs in Ontario schools. Because it's an organization with international links, Red Cross aids citizens of other countries.

The Red Cross does all this with the help of a dedicated body of volunteers who gladly give their time and talents to benefit others. March is Red Cross Month. Take a moment to reflect on how the Red Cross has had a positive effect on your life or on the lives of people close to you.

You can help the Red Cross to continue their services and programs in your community. Your local branch will be delighted to show you how you can help. There's always a need for volunteers - volunteers the Red Cross trains to help in many areas.

The Red Cross also needs funds to carry on its work. Red Cross Month is a fund-raising campaign month for many Ontario branches. They need to collect a lot of money this year to provide their special Health and Care related services. Donations can be made to a canvasser or to your local branch. All donations are tax deductible and receipts will be issued.



Letter from the Editor

Paul Dorsey

To inherit the earth

American Secretary of State Alexander Haig - a Hawk - tells us that the "imminent" Soviet invasion is now as close as Latin America. And we thought we only had Poland to worry about!

The situation in El Salvador is indeed critical, but it is also far too complex for General Haig to simply forecast a step-by-step Communist march into Mexico and Arizona. Surely most North Americans are aware that the political situation throughout much of Latin America closely and dangerously resembles that of Iran before the revolution: American imperialism at its most decadent and disruptive.

Totalitarian rulers rely on American-trained and equipped "national guards" to maintain some travesty of democratic order amid the near chaos of day-to-day life under tragic economic and social repression. This is not the rhetoric of the student militants; it is reality in the land of puppet governments set up and knocked down according to the stock market whims of such politics-and-big-business consortiums as the Trilateral Commission, which counts among its confidantes Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter and current vice-president George Bush.

These are financial - not ideological - forays into the Third World by corporate-backed government agents. It is not only reasonable but unavoidable for me to believe that Soviet military aggression, open and bawdy where American offensives have been covert and subversive of late, is prompted by identical ambitions, from Afghanistan to Cuba.

Thus we are led to the premise that all war and related military maneuvers are sparked by hopes for financial gain and fiscal solidarity shared by a handful of influential businessmen and politicians who are privy to the real "secret of the world".

As Aldous Huxley warned, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make thee mad."

If you accept this premise, as I do, it seems ludicrous to idealisticly mercenary anything more than an individualistic mercenary role in military action. As I said two weeks ago, Poland's "freedom fighters" represent a different sort of situation. Poland can perhaps be repressed by Soviet might; North America certainly cannot.

There may be Russians running Queen's Park someday down the line; Russians running Ottawa; even Russians running Edmonton. I contend they will not be able to curtail our basic freedoms, although we in the media may have a rough time of it.

To be extremely optimistic about it, I might even surmise that the public discipline intrinsic to times of military rule would help get the economy steaming again.

If you have accepted this world's transient nature, you should have no problem accepting pacifism as a necessary lifestyle in this all-too-violent world.

Once again, space limitations prevent my elaborating further. More on this again at a future date.

I would like to publicly apologize to Fran Baines and her Progressive Conservative supporters for some editorial indiscretion this past week. Two largely anti-Conservative letters to the editor ran in last Wednesday's Herald, only one day before the election. The fact that no one would have a chance to rebut simply didn't occur to me. As hollow as our apology must sound now that the election is over, I believe Mrs. Baines, to whom I have also apologized privately, understands that the oversight was just that and was not a deliberate move.