

Georgetown needs 1982 solution to Focal dilemma

With the reappointment of Coun. Mike Armstrong as planning board chairman last week, Halton Hills politicians readied themselves for another year (an election year at that) of tackling the outstanding issues of the day. Appointments of committee chairmen, while hardly comparable to federal Cabinet selections, are an annual responsibility that reflects in some ways how council members feel about their colleagues and the jobs they've been doing.

With Coun. Armstrong back in the chair, we hope our civic leaders are at last ready to make 1982 the year in which long-standing concerns about the future of Georgetown are resolved. Specifically, we hope the months before councilors hit the campaign trail again will see a definitive solution to the issue of Focal Properties Ltd. and its claim to vacant lands south of the community.

In 1981, while still under Coun. Armstrong's direction, the planning board played a relatively low-profile role, emerging as a major force only when deliberations over the downtown BIAs or Georgetown's Guelph Street corridor earned local headlines. Apart from the main issues of the day, the board's work involved mostly one-shot matters, severance appeals and a few housing starts.

Consideration of the Focal Properties bid to build 1,740 homes south of town Georgetown waited through 1981 for word from the ministry of environment, whose consultants continue to study whether the community's sewage treatment plant can accommodate a larger population. Early indications showed the board that there may well be potential for substantial growth.

Town officials say the ministry decision is expected at the end of this month, with public hearings expected to be scheduled for March.

Herald readers got used to the Focal issue during 1977 and 1978, when the firm's threat to sue Halton Hills for alleged breach of contract had enough ratepayers concerned that they formed a new association to independently monitor the situation and, if necessary, advise council.

The would-be lawsuit carried a great deal of political weight among all factions, though councilors steadfastly refused to bow to pressure. In those days, there were strongly-worded confrontations between Bruce McLaughlin of Mississauga, who runs Focal's parent company, and the town fathers. No one, it seemed, fully comprehended the details of the predicament, but many suspected some elaborate backroom politicking.

After all that, it was probably a good thing the dust was able to settle last year. Hopefully, the viewpoints of councilors, ratepayers, voters and developers alike have become clearer and all parties are prepared for some level-headed planning in the best interests of the community once that all-important ministry revelation is ready.

That's where the planning board comes in, and we fervently hope Coun. Armstrong, a mainstay veteran of the town council chamber but a quieter voice at the regional level, has prepared himself fully for all the possibilities. He's had time to do his homework, much of it in conjunction with now-departed planning director Mario Venditti, and his handling of the Focal issue, depending on just what the ministry has to say this month, will no doubt be a major highlight of his personal political career.

Everyone acknowledges that the Focal problem is one big "can of worms"; best of luck with it, chairman Mike - we're looking forward to a sound and expeditious solution this year.



Clark's optimism in Quebec perhaps a little premature



Ottawa Report
By Stewart MacLeod

Ottawa Bureau of The Herald
In one of his year-end interviews, Conservative Leader Joe Clark expressed the optimistic view that his long and sturdy stand against Prime Minister Trudeau's unilateral patriation of the constitution would give him and his party an exciting new rebirth in Quebec.

And there is no doubt that Clark fought a valiant battle against the government's original patriation package. He played no small part in forcing Trudeau and Justice Minister Jean Chretien to get back to the bargaining table with the 10 premiers in search of a wider accord. The original resolution, you will recall, was supported only by the governments of Ontario and New Brunswick. It was Clark who led the parliamentary fight against that resolution, often against opposition from large segments of the public and, even more often, from segments of his own party. For months, he stood his ground against not only the federal Liberals,

but also against Conservative premiers William Davis and Richard Hatfield.

Whether one agrees with Clark's stand is entirely beside the point. What he did do, beyond any expressed doubt, is perform brilliantly in Parliament during that period.

QUEBEC SPOKESMAN
And after the government went back to the negotiating table and reached an accord with nine of the 10 provinces, Clark and the vast majority of his party supported the resulting resolution in Parliament. But he took advantage of every opportunity to urge Quebec's participation, and he even undertook direct correspondence with Premier Rene Levesque in an effort to find common ground. While Trudeau and Chretien held to the view that such appeals were useless - on the grounds that a Quebec government devoted to separatism would never agree to a new constitutional accord - Clark was relentless in his efforts. There were occasions when the Alberta-born leader seemed to be the most effective spokesman in Parliament on behalf of the Quebec people.

And now, Clark hopes to reap some rewards for his efforts. "One of the side advantages of the constitutional position is that this party now has roots and potential in Quebec that we haven't had for a long time," Clark said in one of his year-end chats. "That is important for the country because it means that there is now a national party that can bring the whole country together..."

LITTLE CREDIT

He went on to say that his party's role in the constitutional squabble has been "very roundly celebrated" in Quebec. "...while other party leaders have gone down over the last year in that province, my standing has gone up so dramatically." He referred to things being said and written by commentators and editorialists.

Perhaps Clark is bearing and reading things that have escaped me - and I don't mean to be the least bit sarcastic here - but it's my feeling that the Tory leader is not getting a fraction of the credit due him in Quebec. In fact, apart from a few generalized compliments from editorial writers, Clark doesn't figure prominently in any of the discussion. The constitutional accord was reached between Trudeau and nine premiers, with all the opposition coming from Rene Levesque. Even Quebec Liberal Leader Claude Ryan, with his "Canada Clause" compromises, is being treated as some sort of interested bystander.

Not even a Solomon could predict how this whole constitutional business will shake down over the next few months. Those who cling to potentially popular positions today could be swept to sea by changing waves of public opinion - and others could be carried to safety.

But I think it's far too early for Clark to claim any dramatic new breakthrough in Quebec for him or his party. With all due respect, we've heard that many times before.

Proposed information law boasts growing price tag



Queen's Park
By Derek Nelson

Queen's Park Bureau of The Herald
The years drift by and there on the horizon, just-in-sight but seemingly never any closer, is the provincial government's famed freedom of information law.

It has been in the works now one way or another for more than six years, and the price tag to develop it is nearing \$2 million.

After some initial internal fumblyings and hesitations, the 1976 minority Conservative cabinet turned the idea over to a Commission on Freedom of Information and Individual Privacy, usually called the Williams Commission after chairman Carlton Williams.

It reported in 1980 to former Minister Without Portfolio Alan Pope, and basically concluded that "facts" should be freely available to the public from the government, but civil service "opinion" given ministers should remain secret.

Pope found the report acceptable, and promised early legislation. That quickly went by the board, as considerable political and bureaucratic resistance arose against Pope's bias in favor of maximum openness.

NEW MAN
Later, Pope was promoted to Natural Resources Minister in a cabinet shuffle, and a new Minister Without Portfolio, Norm Sterling, took

over the freedom of information job.

That was April 1981. In September that year Sterling called a press conference to announce he wasn't satisfied with the draft version of Pope's bill and wanted it over-hauled.

He also wanted it to dovetail with Mr. Justice Horace Krever's recommendations concerning access to, and privacy of health care records.

So he was establishing a freedom of information task force under civil servant and lawyer Carl Dombek to write both a position paper and new draft legislation.

This was promised for mid-December.

The word now is that the task force, while finished, has yet to make its presentation to cabinet. That may happen this month, and if it does only then will the draft bill and position (or white) paper become public.

The position paper explains the sections of the bill and why the government chose one option rather than another in its writing.

In theory that means a freedom of information law sometime during the spring session of the legislature. We'll

see, however.

Liberal and NDP critics, among others, doubt it. Too many years and too much study have convinced them the government prefers to junk the whole concept and conduct business as usual.

KEEP WATCH
In truth, the actual working of the law may not be as important as the attitude that goes into it. In many ways the Ontario government is already quite open.

And the part of the process that the opposition parties would like to get their hands upon - civil service advice to ministers on policy matters - is going to remain a closed book no matter what.

What will be interesting to watch is where Sterling draws the line between opinion-type material and so-called "facts" open to all.

Keep an eye on the following couple of items or their equivalents: -all government public opinion polls

-the salary ranges of administrative staff at colleges and universities. If the bill makes them available it may not be too bad.

Halton's History

From our files

THIRTY YEARS AGO—One of the most enduring musicals of all time, Edna Ferber's Show Boat comes to the Roxy for the last three days of the week. This is the third filming of the Broadway hit. In the early days of the talkies, blonde Laura La Plante starred in the movie. A later version brought Irene Dunne to stardom, along with Alan Jones, who is playing in Toronto this week in the musical show "Guys and Dolls." The new Show Boat is in technicolor, and stars Howard Keel and Kathryn Grayson. It was a successful novel long before Jerome Kern composed his beautiful musical featuring songs like "Why do I love you?", "Bill", "Ole Man River", and "Make Believe."

Council appointed a committee composed of councillors Goodlet, McGilvray, MacDonald and Allen to find out what other councils in North Halton feel about the high school question. John Bell, Dr. J.B. Milne and Walter Biehn, Georgetown representatives on the school board, had been asked to meet with council. Mr. Bell gave a resume of progress to date. When Georgetown joined the district two years ago, he said, the question was whether one central school would be built. Arguing for two years had accomplished nothing. At present, a motion is on the school board's books to build new schools at Georgetown and Acton and retain the present one in Milton. The school board owns no school in Acton and a poor one in Georgetown and the consensus of council seems to favor trying for one school for Acton and Georgetown. If this doesn't work, they'll go ahead with two new schools.

Members of the 1982 Esqueping township council took the oath of office at the inaugural meeting on Jan. 14 in the council chambers at Stewarttown. The new council is composed of Heeve George Leslie, councillors Walter Linham, Deputy-revee Wilfred Bird. During discussion of business a decision to engage a surveyor or engineer to make a survey of the watershed around the Credit River was made, with recommendations for stopping flooding which has caused serious property damage the past few years. The motion was made after a petition had been received signed by several of the residents affected.

TWENTY YEARS AGO—Georgetown Midgets played in Milton Monday, defeating Milton 4 to 1. Georgetown was on top of the Milton team from the drop of the puck and it was a fast, clean game. Wednesday, Georgetown hosted Milton, defeating them 5 to 1.

Appointment of the 1982 Industrial Commission has occupied a large share of the first two town council meetings and opinions differ on the composition of the commission. Last year's 10 member commission included four councilors, four appointees of the Chamber of Commerce and two Jaycees. This year it would appear that council representation might be cut to two and whether council will choose its own appointment slate or accept advice from the Chambers seemed to be in doubt Monday.

Discussions between council's road committee and executives of Georgetown Businessmen's Association are slated for the near future on projected plans for a downtown parking area. Last year considerable groundwork was done on a plan which would provide off-street parking eventually behind some or all of the downtown store district and a bylaw was given two readings to initiate the legal procedure necessary when land is acquired for this purpose.

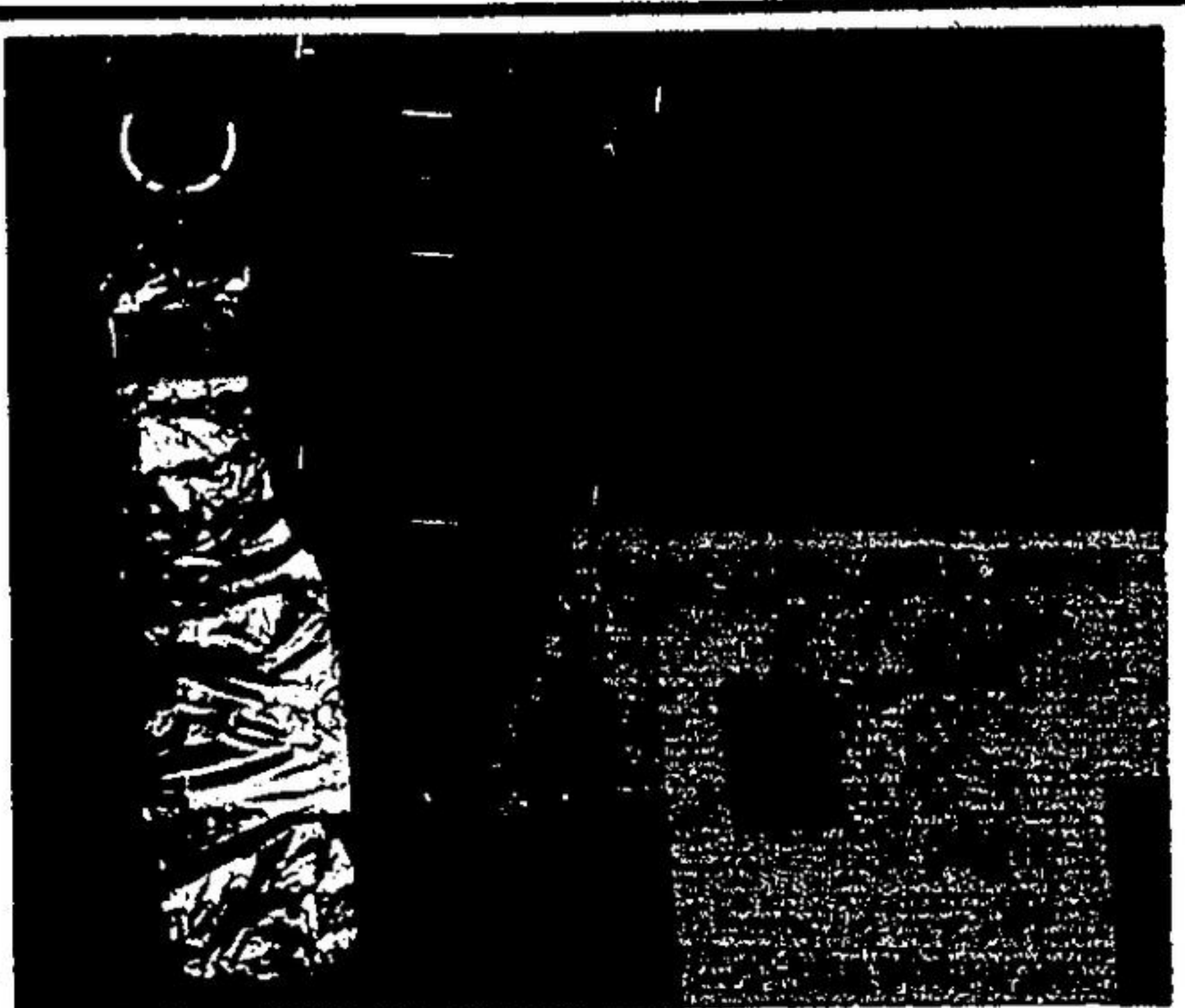
TEN YEARS AGO—Seven hundred spectators witnessed Georgetown's North Halton Raiders trip up first place Welland Marauders in the Memorial Arena Friday night, with a balanced attack that should have produced an even wider margin of victory than 4 to 2. The Raiders currently hold down third spot in the OHA's Niagara Peninsula Intermediate A League, but have been steadily rising toward the top since sinking to one stop from the basement.

Halton county should remain intact and should set up its own regional government unit, warned James Swanborough said last week as he took office. Swanborough, the reeve of Burlington, was the only candidate for the warden's office. The takeover by Hamilton of the Burlington area in Halton county was proposed in a regional government study issued in November, 1969, by the Steele Commission. Provincial authorities still haven't made a decision on the report. Swanborough says the takeover would be the downfall of Halton. The Steele Commission, headed by lawyer Donald Steele studied regional government in the Hamilton-Wentworth County-Burlington area. The Commission said a Metro Hamilton unit should be set up, and included in the Hamilton-centered region.

H.H. Bert Hinton of Acton announced last week that he intends to seek the federal Progressive Conservative nomination for the Halton riding. Others who have indicated their willingness to contest the election are James Muir and Terence O'Connor of Oakville, and possibly Dr. Ivan Hunter of Milton. Rumor has it that a Georgetown candidate will also join the race. A former warden of Halton county, Mr. Hinton has been on Acton council and is currently a member of the board of directors of Sheridan College. He has the support of Acton and Esqueping township PC associations, he said. The PC annual meeting will be Jan. 27 with the nomination convention March 15.

ONE YEAR AGO—Non-medical workers at Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital will meet tomorrow (Thursday) to discuss possible strike action in their contract dispute with the hospital. The 43 registered nursing assistants, housekeeping, kitchen and laundry staff are members of Local 143 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, but the hospital doesn't belong to the central bargaining unit of the Ontario Hospital Association, so the local isn't recognized by the union.

A coroner's jury investigating the drowning death of Bruno Scodellaro, 21, at Waterfalls Park near Limehouse has called on Halton Hills to pass safety bylaws governing the operation of privately-owned parks. The decision also says the provincial government should pass similar legislation according to regulations outlined in a Red Cross Safety Services brief. In making a long list of safety regulations which include staffing of both the pool area (where Mr. Scodellaro drowned) and the quarry with trained lifeguards and posting swimming areas with hazard warning signs, the jury recommended that park owner Joe Prucy keep the park closed until extensive safety changes are made.



CURLING IN THE FUTURE

'A look to the future' is the theme of North Halton Golf and Country Club's Jan. 24-30 Mid-Winter Banquet as this display suggests. This Banquet is a fun event and costumes and theme teams are welcome. Will people be curling on the moon or 25,000 leagues under the sea in the 21st century? (Herald photo)

Jaycees Week

Jan. 31 to Feb. 6

Details in Friday's Herald

POET'S CORNER

The Walking Plow

As a lad I ploughed the ground
The only job then for me to be found
Fed the pigs, and milked the cow
I walked behind the walking plow

The horses they were hard and tough
You very seldom heard them puff
Would try to keep those furrows straight
There was no time to stop or wait.
I would walk ten miles each day
A steady grind, no time to play
Every day you'd plow the same amount
Step it by yds, that's how you'd count
Some times I'd strike a jagged stone
The plow handles left a bruised nose
A broken plow would make you care
Take all day to replace that share
Work was hard, life was rough

Men those days, were better stuff
Down by the pretty little stream
It was surely a painter's dream
Way up in the apple tree
All the birds would sing to me
Over by the house, the bark of a dog
On edge of the swamp the croak of a frog
By the bush, the caw of a crow
The blackest bird I ever did know
All these things, as I plowed my way
They are the memories of my boyhood day.

—By Albert Brooks, RR2, Acton