

Arts groups build spirit

There is something about this time of year which brings out the best in the town's art community. Thanks to them, there is an abundance of events worth attending in celebration of Christmas.

For too many of us, the Christmas season is something we'd rather be getting out of rather than heading into: as radio announcers piously remind procrastinators about how many more shopping days are left before the 25th, Christmas becomes a blur of crowded shopping malls, skinny Santas, wailing children and tired old Christmas hits.

For those of us who seek salvation, the arts community has tossed out a collective lifesaver, having worked earnestly on several seasonal specials, most of which will be featured at the John Elliott Theatre.

The first sing of relief are the Georgetown Choral Society concerts this weekend. Under the direction of Dale Wood, the GCS has, with its uncannily professional flair, prepared a "Fantasia for Christmas". As an added attraction, the GCS will combine its musical efforts with a full chamber orchestra.

Later in the week, Nornic Productions brings back the joys of an old-fashioned fireside Christmas reading at Oxbow Books in Georgetown with its

warmth of Christmas. Georgetown Little Theatre and the Peel Panto Players have combined their efforts for the benefit of area youngsters. Their production of Hickory Dickory Dock is planned for the John Elliott Theatre Dec. 10, 11 and 12.

The Cantante Singers, a young group of musicians have been rehearsing for their Time of Joy production Dec. 17 which will also be held at the theatre. On the program are several Christmas favorites and no doubt the audience will find it difficult to resist the temptation to sing along at some point in the show.

The members of these productions have devoted a great deal of time during a season which is busy for them as it is for the rest of us. We are indebted to them for helping us keep track of some of the non-commercial joys of Christmas and we should set aside some of our own time to (literally) applaud their efforts.

The enjoyment these talented people feel for their work, especially at this time of year is infectious. And for those of us numbed into narrow-mindedness by the commercialization of Christmas, who see Christmas only as a time in which bank accounts suffer serious injury, these performances hold a cure.



Credibility problems haunt new economic commission



Ottawa Report
By Stewart MacLeod

Ottawa Bureau of The Herald
When Prime Minister Trudeau gets through appointing members to the new Royal Commission on the Economy, perhaps that investigative unit will gain some of the credibility it sorely needs. But right now, it's somewhat lacking in that respect.

It was bad enough that the prime minister was embarrassed into announcing the formation of the royal commission before even his cabinet, and particularly his finance minister, had been consulted. But it's even worse that the new chairman of the commission - former finance minister Donald Macdonald - is mentally toying with the leadership of the Liberal Party while he should be devoting all of his considerable talents to the economic job at hand. In the two weeks since Trudeau announced that such a commission would be established, to conduct one of the most important studies ever undertaken for the government, the reaction has been entirely political. There has scarcely been a question about the economic implications.

FEW QUESTIONS
Under normal circumstances, the government would be under intense

pressure to divulge details about the study. The daily question period in Parliament would be chock-a-block with inquiries about the terms of reference, the scope of the studies, the probable witnesses, interim reports, etc.

But, in this case, these questions have been at a minimal. Instead, everyone is preoccupied with the way the commission was formed - in apparent haste - and the fact that the chairmanship was handed to a possible successor for Pierre Trudeau. In fact, many think that Donald Macdonald is Trudeau's choice as the next Liberal leader since it's conventional wisdom that the prime minister would do just about anything to prevent the job from going to John Turner.

In any event, Macdonald says that when he was approached to accept the chairmanship of the royal commission he made it clear that, if the prime minister retired, he wanted to be free to consider a run at the leadership. And, he said, Trudeau "acknowledged that condition". He also predicted that the commission will require only two of its allotted three years to complete its work.

DIFFICULT BIRTH
And, naturally, when Macdonald makes a prediction like this it's viewed in Ottawa's political circles as another indication he is trying to clear the decks in time for a leadership convention. Obviously, Vancouver Tory MP Pat Carney was politically inspired when she said that Canadians are having difficulty deciding whether this is a commission on the economy or a stage for the Liberal leadership, but her point cannot be ignored. At the very least, the prime minister has once again displayed singular insensitivity

in the way he has set up this all-important group.

No doubt he was caught off-guard when a newspaper first leaked the fact that such a commission was going to be established, and had the leak not occurred, the prime minister would have consulted his cabinet and caucus before revealing anything. But still, it was passing strange that he had already decided on a chairman without even talking things over with his finance minister - particularly since the commission's terms of reference were scheduled to go to Government House later that day. And one would think that such a potentially controversial appointment as that of Donald Macdonald would have merited cabinet discussion - yes, even lengthy cabinet arguments - before the matter was settled.

Macdonald's unquestioned ability aside, one wonders whether this immense undertaking should be headed by a former finance minister, who is not only responsible for some of the government's present controversial economic policies, but who is obviously interested in winning support for a leadership bid.

And this is not to suggest that Macdonald would compromise his principles in any way. It's a question of how the commission, headed by the former finance minister, is perceived by the public - because, without co-operation from all segments of society, the study won't be worth much.

And so far, the birth of this royal commission has not been without some curious complications. Trudeau, as a midwife, leaves something to be desired.

Apartment fiasco means more property controls



Queen's Park
By Derek Nelson

Queen's Park Bureau of The Herald
Two truths will eventually emerge from the complicated and controversial sale and re-sale of 11,000 Metro Toronto rental apartment units that is being called the Cadillac-Fairview-Greymac deal.

One is that the pressure exerted by tenants on politicians will mean greater and greater controls exerted by government over the property rights of the owners of all apartment buildings.

The second is that the deterioration of the rental accommodation housing stock in this province will continue the slide of the past decade, and may even accelerate.

For the Conservative government the political ramifications have already been felt.

During the Nov. 8 municipal elections, apartment blocks where people of general Conservative tendencies lived, overwhelmingly voted the NDP's bash-the-landlord line.

Tenants were scared that major rent increases to pay for the mortgage financing of the sold rental properties.

INTENSE PRESSURE
The result was that Consumer and Commercial Relations Minister Robert Elgie retroactively changed the rules of the buying-and-selling-apartments

game so as to keep the value of the land from escalating.

Let us be clear on what he did. It was the equivalent of rolling back the fantastic profits single-family homeowners received in both 1972 and 1980 when the value of their properties soared out-of-sight.

There is a subsidiary question in the specific case of the Cadillac Fairview deal that Elgie has also set out to address. This is whether all the transactions that - apparently - saw these 11,000 units end up in Saudi hands fitted ministry rules, regulations, and laws. Bullying by opposition Liberal and NDP members to make sure Elgie follows through on investigations along this line is fair enough.

SOCIAL CLIMATE
What is not legitimate, however, is the moral undertone that has come more and more to the foreground as the Greymac story unfolds. There is an assumption that tenants have a right to under-priced accommodation while those who own the properties should run them at a loss.

Unfortunately, the social climate today is such that the sleaziest anti-landlord nonsense receives wide backing, with the result that effective

ownership of rental units is passing more and more to tenants - who know a good deal when they have it, and also carry the voting clout to ensure they keep it.

The end result essentially will be, and Elgie's moves are part of the process, the nationalization of the rental housing market.

BAD TROUBLE
But this short-term fixation by politicians on winning votes is in the long run dooming this province to even greater shortages of new rental accommodation and deterioration of the existing stock.

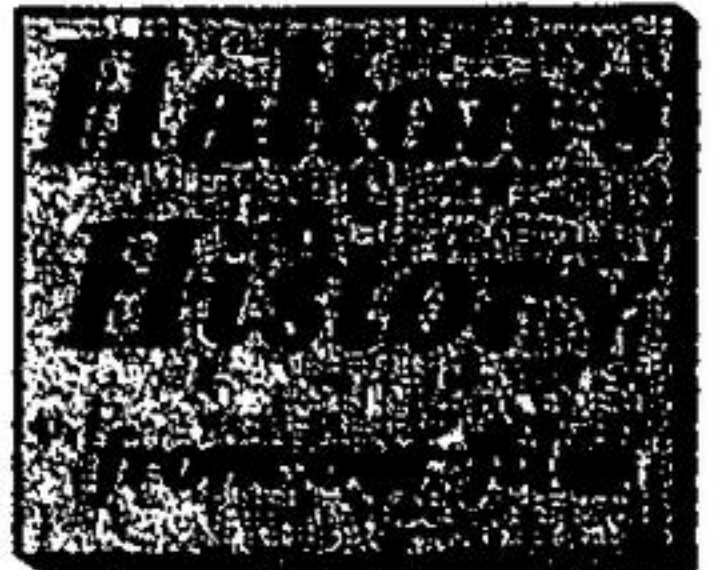
Cadillac Fairview, one of the quality landlords around, bailed out of the business because it couldn't deliver a decent return on its investment.

Thanks to Elgie, the Liberals, and NDP, it becomes even tougher now to make money. In fact, private sector rental apartment building has probably taken a body blow from which it won't recover.

The record is plain everywhere in the world. When housing becomes social capital and decent profits forbidden nothing can stop the spread of "key money" corruption, homeless families, and an eternal backlog of demand.

Statistics indicate that ActiVan, the town's transportation service for physically handicapped residents, is being well used as it enters the sixth month stretch before its second anniversary in May. According to bar graphs of records kept up to September, 2,805 passenger trips were taken on ActiVan since last May. It was most heavily called upon in March when 843 passenger trips were taken. Between ActiVan's inauguration in May, 1981 and the end of that year, 2,346 passenger trips were made by ActiVan. The busiest month last year was December.

Acti-Van use grows



THIRTY YEARS AGO-Flowers in The Herald office window this week have caused an unusual amount of interest to passersby. The beautiful blooms, known as anthurium, were brought from the Barbados by Gwynneth McGowan who was vacationing there, for her mother, Mrs. W.A. McGowan brought them to the office where everyone could enjoy them. The medium rose, waxy flowers and huge light green leaves lead one, on a casual glance, to think they are artificial. The Dominion Seed House says there are 606 varieties of anthurium growing in tropical countries but only two dozen are cultivated in North America.

TWENTY YEARS AGO-There will be an election in Esqueping township this year, but only for council and school board. Reeve George Leslie and Deputy Reeve Wilfrid Leslie received acclamations. In addition to the present councillors, George Currie, Robert Lawson and Walter Linham, newcomer Mervin Barber was nominated for council. All signified they would try for the three council seats. Shirley Armstrong, and Stanley Brown, the two incumbents and a third nominee Harry Herensberger are running for two school board seats.

TEN YEARS AGO-An addition to the library, which would give two and a half times the present space, yet preserve the characteristics of the present building with its old stone work and stained glass windows was proposed to the Library Board Tuesday night by architect Paul Martel. The preliminary sketches and estimate were requested by council in September and the results will be presented for their consideration at the first opportunity after the election. The 6,500 square foot addition costing an estimated \$200,000 will partially surround the end of the present building and extend toward Knox Church. The addition will have an extra storey, the upper half a mezzanine overlooking the present adult library, housing rare books, a large reading room and study carrels.

ONE YEAR AGO-Dow Jones' position regarding the impending closure of its Irwin-Dorsey Ltd. subsidiary remains unchanged. The Georgetown's firm's president Dick Willis told The Herald Tuesday.

POET'S CORNER Seek for your South

The brown dappled Fawn,
Son of the doe,
Slivers in the shadow,
Knee deep in the snow.

His whole world is bright,
The glaring snow hard,
Diamond white,
Turquoise barred.

The trees, they are black,
The needles dull gold,
Boughs break and crack,
In the keen cold.

The brown dappled Fawn,
Beret of the doe,
Trembles and shudders,
Lays down in the snow.

Brown agate eyes,
Opened round,
Agonize,
At the cold ground.

At the cold heaven,
Enamelled pale,
At the shriven earth,
By the snowy gale.

Fawn, Fawn,
Seek for your south,
For kind dawn,
With her warm mouth.

For green sod,
With gold and blue,
Dappled, as God,
Has dappled you.

For slumberous ease,
Firm turf to run,
Through frosted trees,
Into the sun.

The shivering Fawn,
Fawns at the snow,
South and dawn,
Lie far below.

The sleek fireams,
The snow flies,
The Fawn dreams,
With wide brown eyes.

-By CAROL A. MERTEN,
Georgetown

Wee Gordie

Wee Gordie's smiles are infectious
He lifts your spirits high
Warm cuddles freely gives
Whenever he is sigh.

He's only a wee little tyke
But his heart is big as a house
One moment he rears like a lion
The next he squeaks like a mouse.

He turns the most difficult day
Into one filled with joy
Bless his gentle nature
He's such a perfect little boy.

As he grows and adds his years
I pray he never alters
He's on the way to happy years
I hope he never falters.
-By Marlene C. Dickson,
R.R. 2, Eoseton

"HAVE A FIRE-SAFE CHRISTMAS
AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!"

Author Unknown