

The view from the top of the molehill

The Herald doesn't count itself among the media chastised recently by Mayor Pete Pomeroy for making a mountain out of a molehill regarding the interest council has shown in a future site for a proposed municipal complex.

Our editorial comment on the placing of a \$10,000 deposit on the selected parcel of land ("Questionable town decision", Nov. 24) preceded the feisty news articles and angry editorials seen in Halton Hills' other printed media. And while we expressed concern at that time over the nature and timing of council's decision, we tend to side with the mayor on what has taken place in the media since.

We will not dwell on differences in editorial perspective; that is for the discerning reader to decide. Our current concern involves a petition circulating in Acton and area in which more than 200 citizens have expressed opposition to the municipal complex decision.

Council, as we see it, must learn two things from what has transpired since election day: first, that major decisions involving obviously sensitive matters and especially a large expenditure must be made with considerable fanfare before

and after to avoid giving people the impression that something fishy's going on.

Second, because of these stringent economic times and the fact that the average week's news has gone from bad to horrifying in content, citizens are especially receptive to newspaper prompting, regardless of whether editorial bias is displayed in the coverage itself.

Thus, sizeable trouble might be brewing in Acton over an issue still very much in its infancy. This could have been avoided, with all 200 signators and other annoyed citizens across town kept passively informed, watchful but calm.

Instead, thanks to a flurry of action behind the scenes and a general attitude of overconfident cliquishness on council's part, many voters have missed the important point that the project is at a very preliminary stage, not unlike dozens of other municipal proposals which require thousands of dollars "seed money" before producing first (if any) fruit.

The public will not trust council until council becomes even more openly accountable. Don't dangle surprises before hungry journalists yearning for their own Watergate mystery to solve.

It's snow fair

It seems especially fitting that this hemisphere should be blanketed with snow as each year draws to a close: the glum news seems to pile up correspondingly with the white stuff.

The prime minister's cocky promises for the new year notwithstanding, it's worthwhile for the average voter to consider his current governments while gazing through frosty windows at the falling snow.

Just think: for every limousine ride our Cabinet ministers take, one less sidewalk gets plowed clear;

For every private jet flight our premier enjoys, one less social service finds its deserving recipient;

For every suite still not booked at Minaki Lodge, one

less school improvement program gets past the budget committee forced to implement Bill 82;

For every copy of MTC magazine, Workmen's Compensation Board Report and any other glossy little bulletin and sales pitch published at Queen's Park or Ontario Hydro, one less health care plan gets off the ground.

By way of New Year's resolutions, here's one suggestion: "I will no longer blame the local school board or municipal council for shortcomings foisted upon it by the provincial and federal governments."

Something to think about when you're waiting for the snowplow.

The Herald
will publish this Thursday
See you then!

A Christmas fire safety message

From the Halton Hills Fire Department

Over the past number of years, Halton Hills firefighters have been witnesses to several tragedies which have taken the joy from Christmas festivities of many families. Often these tragedies could have been prevented by precautions and extra attention to hazards in the home.

The following suggestions are offered in the hopes that all our community may enjoy a safe, happy festive season.

1. For those who enjoy the aesthetic effect of an evergreen Christmas tree, a few simple precautions could prevent a potential disaster. Buying a fresh tree which does not have brittle branches is a must.

Before bringing a tree into your home, cut the butt diagonally and place the tree in a container suitable to keep water over the butt during the period the tree is in your home. Having the butt immersed in

water will keep your tree fresher and safer over the holiday.

When decorating your tree, use only well maintained CSA approved lighting fixtures and non-combustible decorations. Be sure to keep lights and other sources of ignition away from gifts wrapped in very combustible paper products. Even a green tree will burn if ignited by burning material around the base of the tree.

2. After friends are in to celebrate the season, be sure to check the furniture and ash trays for smouldering cigarettes and dispose of them in a non-combustible container.

3. Be sure the battery in your smoke detector has not worn out.

4. Before leaving home be sure all appliances are off and the fire in solid fuel appliances is out.

Please, have a happy fire safe holiday.



Auditor finds civil service looking 'better' all the time



Ottawa Report
By Stewart McLeod

Ottawa Bureau of The Herald
I didn't come to work today with the idea of writing about the latest report of Auditor-General Kenneth Dye. In fact, nothing could have been further from my mind.

But, in thumbing through the weighty document, I stumbled across a couple of surveys undertaken by the auditor-general, and now I not only want to write about them, I am also tempted to apply for a job in the public service. It's looking better all the time.

I always knew there were some fairly attractive sinecures in the public service and that a few enterprising employees were able to cash cheques having done a minimum of work. But until this latest auditor-general's report came out, I had no idea it was possible to work in government without knowing what you were supposed to be doing.

But apparently it has been this way all along, because when Dye's officials took a survey of 4,657 public servants they found, in effect, that 30 per cent of

them didn't know what was expected of them. No, not three per cent, but 30 per cent.

And in a majestic burst of understatement, the auditor-general expressed the view that "they should know what their task is."

That, on the face of it, seems fair.

ANOTHER STUDY

Then there is the second survey, which perhaps is not meant to be studied in context with the first one but, for my peculiar purpose, strikes me as complementary. It tells us that a survey of seven departments established the fact that only one per cent of employees were deemed to be unsatisfactory.

Okay, this means that 99 per cent of all employees are deemed to be satisfactory - a figure which, in itself, is remarkable. But let's not forget that 30 per cent of these apparently don't seem to know what they're supposed to be doing.

The equation: If 99 per cent of employees perform adequately when only 70 per cent know what they are supposed to be doing, what would the adequacy percentage be if everyone knew what they were supposed to be doing?

I was never good in math, but is it any wonder that the public service looks appealing in this new light. The trouble for me - and I suspect for most of us - is that I know what I am supposed to be doing, it's just that I have trouble doing it. Imagine how much less frustrating it would be if you

didn't know what you were supposed to be doing in the first place. Why, you could blissfully surpass all expectations - after creating them yourself.

SERIOUS SITUATION

I guess I should mention a third survey. It indicates that 68 per cent of public servants feel that their annual performance review by their superiors "has little or no effect on the way they do their jobs."

Now when you stack the results of that survey on top of the other two, it would add up to the inescapable conclusion that even if you don't know what you're doing, there is a 99 per cent chance you will be judged satisfactory and, even if you are not, you can be confident, 68 per cent of the time, that the subsequent assessment won't affect your future.

There was this revealing comment: "During our interviews, managers indicated that they do not want to affect the morale, motivation and careers of employees by recording weaknesses."

This is perhaps why, out of a total of 215,643 public servants, only 500 were actually fired last year.

But then how you fire someone from performing in a job that has no performance level?

The auditor-general says it's all a "very serious problem."

And, with my luck, he'll probably change the whole system - and I'll be forced to spend the rest of my life painfully aware of what it is I am supposed to be doing.

Derek takes hot oil bath as abortion issues weighed



Queen's Park
By Derek Nelson

Queen's Park Bureau of The Herald

Writing about abortion is a little like willingly taking a bath in a vat of boiling oil. No topic produces more shrill debate, which might be expected of a subject where the definition of a human life is at stake.

But thanks to Dr. Henry Morgenthaler of Montreal it looks like the issue will be heating up in this province in a more public way than in the past.

Morgenthaler has said he intends to sponsor an abortion clinic in Ontario similar to the one he operates in Quebec, for which he was prosecuted under the Criminal Code.

The code says abortions can be

performed only in an accredited hospital after an application has been screened by a three-person therapeutic abortion committee.

But Morgenthaler convinced three Quebec juries he was innocent of performing illegal abortions, although he did spend 10 months in jail when a higher court over-turned the jury verdict.

NOTEASY

Now Attorney-General Roy McMurtry says he will prosecute Morgenthaler should his type of clinic open here, although one suspects that like most politicians he wishes the matter would just go away.

It is a no-win situation for them, caught as they are between the two vociferous groups that label themselves pro-choice (pro-abortion) and right-to-life (anti-abortion).

For more than a decade now right-to-lifers have been waging guerrilla war against hospitals in Ontario that perform abortions with the avowed aim of ending them.

Of 231 hospitals just 100 have therapeutic abortion clinics, and it appears only 72 actually perform abortions currently. Ontario had 30,391

abortions in 1981, a slight decline in the over-all rate from 1980 and of those more than three quarters were under 13-weeks gestation.

ARE LOSING

The pro-choice side claims the need for Morgenthaler-style clinics on the grounds the right-to-lifers are making it more and more difficult to obtain abortions and even where they are available, the hospitals are needlessly endangering women's health by delaying operations longer than necessary.

In short, the Criminal Code is already being circumvented.

So far as the legal side of the argument goes, a prosecution by McMurtry and Morgenthaler's willingness to fight it out in the courts is eminently fair. Let a jury decide.

On the political side the right-to-lifers claim they can swing five per cent of the vote in some ridings at election time and that they are already organizing for the next provincial election. That's fine, too.

DEEPER ISSUE

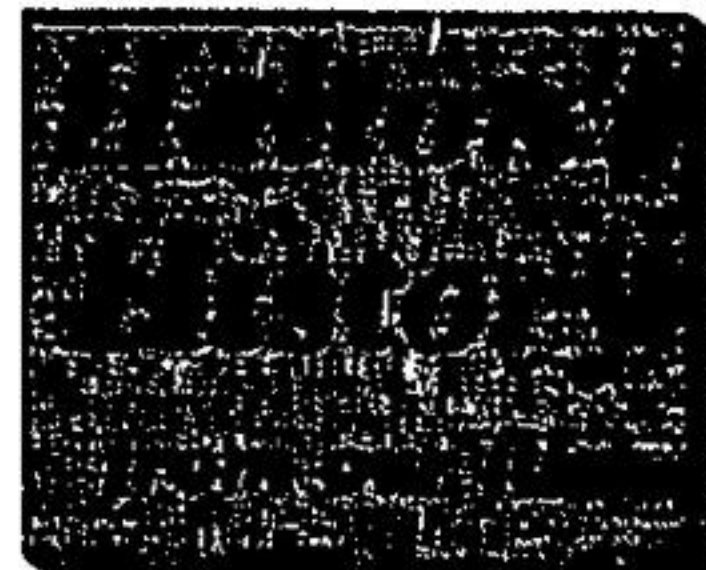
But on the much deeper issue of abortion itself there can be no consensus, for the decision of what is human and when is killing justified are not conclusions susceptible to easy answers.

I'm told, for example, that the literal translation from the Greek of the Biblical commandment Thou Shalt Not Kill is actually Thou Shalt Not Commit Murder, which is much more logical.

Is "terminating a fetus" the same as "killing a baby"? Would executing Clifford Olson, the B.C. child-killer, be murder? What of killing in self-defence, or for the state, as in war?

Are two cells a human being, or does it require first movement (20th week), or actual birth? And so on.

Abortion is not like taking aspirin, so perhaps it should not be easy to obtain. But neither do I want to see a return to the back-room butcher or the victim of rape who must bear the product of hate and violence.



THIRTY YEARS AGO-It's getting to be a habit the way Georgetown Raiders are losing hockey games. If the boys don't smarten up, we won't see any playoffs around here come springtime. In Fergus last Wednesday, Raiders were beaten by a nine-man team. It was the first win of the season for the Fergus club. Besides winning the game, the Thistles gave Raiders a lesson in team spirit and the will to win, which our team hasn't had since the first game played against Milton here. Elmira's Polar Kings, last year's Intermediate B champs came to town Saturday and before the night was over they extended their winning streak to 15, with no losses. They showed the Georgetown fans why they are champs, knocking off the Raiders in easy style and outscoring them 13-4.

TWENTY YEARS AGO-Today's high school has reached the size where presentation of all academic awards is not possible at the annual spring commencement. A new system started Friday when, at a musical evening featuring the school orchestra and choir, intermediate certificates were presented to 150 students who had successfully completed their Grade 10 studies. School board secretary Ernest Forgrave, who assisted Principal J.L. Lambert in presenting certificates, spoke to the audience, stressing the increasing importance of education. He hopes to present higher certificates to each of the students in future years, he said.

TEN YEARS AGO-Deputy reeve Arthur Speight's parting words to town council were of importance to next year's council. Mr. Speight who did not seek re-election this year, suggested that swampland on Princess Anne Drive be leased to the water commission to safeguard a major source of Georgetown's water supply. One of the town's deep wells is already located in this area and surveys have shown that there is an excellent source of untapped water in the area. Without water there can be no progress. At present, we have plenty of water for Georgetown's population and industry, but there is no assurance this will continue, particularly should large industries locate here.

ONE YEAR AGO-Halton Hills will not restore the century-old Acton town hall, council decided Monday night. By a 7-3 recorded vote, council rejected taxpayer participation in an extensive restoration proposal for the hall and, at least temporarily, halted five-year old efforts by community groups to preserve the building for the community's historical posterity. Another motion calling for the building to be sold in light of council's rejection of the restoration package (suggested in a recent consultant's study and adamantly endorsed by Mayor Pete Pomeroy two weeks ago) was later withdrawn.

POET'S CORNER

Solitary

You stand in the sunlight of my being sometimes casting shadows larger than reality.

Gentle breezes caress the boughs that have become the arms of my security.

Immovable you hold to this plane with a grip not easily released for now.

I grow in the shade of your love having you there makes the way more fun.

-By MARLOWE C. DICKSON, RR1 Beeton

Essence of Love

We were together Alone, that last time Our love was born to bleed Like a superficial wound You inflicted my aching expression

With a warm and tender kiss... We were young And you died that way I left a part of my soul Behind

As I grew older Now I realize That flowers only blossom to die Love ages with time Because of its frail essence.

-By HEATHER MACLEOD, AHS student

Lately

Lately you have crystallized like ice upon a window glass. Your eyes, which once shone warm with light, have frosted, opaque. Chilled as a wintry wind your cool words sting... and your arms, where once one could find solace, now coldness only will embrace.

-By DAHLIA PETERSEN, AHS student

SANTA'S MAILBAG

CHILDREN'S LETTERS ARE PRINTED AS RECEIVED.

Letters appear throughout Section 'C'

Thankyou for writing!