

Halton Hills Outlook

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Their Outlook

A superb spokesman for privatization

An unsolicited audio tape arrived in the mail for me here recently.

It was a recording of a speech made by Madsen Pirie, president of the Adam Smith Institute in London and an intellectual influence upon Conservative Margaret Thatcher's government in the United Kingdom.

It was sent by the National Citizens' Coalition (NCC) in Canada, which lately has been in the news for its successful defence of individual liberty in the Mery Lavigne case.



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson

Lavigne is a college teacher who objected to a portion of the union dues he paid going to such unworthy causes as supporting the illegal miners' strike in Britain (that is, activities unrelated to collective bargaining). Lavigne, with the help of the NCC, sued in court under the Charter of Rights and won.

It was a narrow victory, in that Lavigne is not a member of the union but forced to pay dues under the Rand formula. It seems doubtful a regular union member could win the same argument.

But it was that rare thing nowadays, a triumph for the individual against the group (in this case, over the NDP elite who run the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union).

In any event, the tape was unaccompanied by a note or other explanation of why it was sent.

I thought of phoning and asking why, but then said to myself, "no, why don't I listen to it first."

It was great.

Pirie is a superb spokesman for the "privatization" movement - the transfer of both production and service industries from government ownership to the private sector.

It doesn't have many friends in this country, where government ownership seems to be endowed with some kind of moral superiority.

"As a Canadian citizen I won shares in Air Canada," one journalist proudly told Pirie. "Really. Can you sell them?" he asked.

Mind you, privatization does get some unnamed backdoor support here.

Ontario's Liberal government essentially gave away 85 per cent of the Urban Transportation and Development Corporation (UTDC) when it first came to power and, if it could get any kind of money for it at all, would dump its 25 per cent interest in Sunco.

But it doesn't like to talk about it and would never consider privatizing any of its other holdings. Did you know Ontario owned an airline, a railway, a television network, a telephone company, a bank, more housing than any private landlord, and an electricity production and distribution system, among much else?

There isn't space to repeat the economic advantages of privatization in detail, but essentially they come down to efficiency, price, availability of capital and responsiveness to the public. (It is obvious, for instance, that the purpose of the Canadian post office is not to deliver mail, but to keep postal employees in comfortable, well-paid jobs.)

Pirie notes just the threat of privatization is probably worth a 10-per-cent gain in productivity at government firms as they strive mightily to keep freedom at bay.

There is a non-economic fifth reason that Pirie doesn't mention.

Genuine private ownership diffuses state power, as worthy a political goal that exists. (The essential problem of politics isn't poverty, nuclear war or whatever. It is power and how to restrict its use.)

Monopolies, of course, remain a problem whether in government or private hands-but the evidence seems clear they are more responsive in private than in state hands. For one thing, they are scared of falling into state hands.

Pirie sees such monopoly privatization as successful in Britain.

I listened to the tape once. Then I listened to it again. I decided I wouldn't bother calling at all to find why the NCC sent it to me. They might want it back.

Two's a Crowd

By BILL BUTTLE



Thankless job for war graves staff

By GIL HARDY
 Ottawa Bureau
 Thomson News Service

The living write to June Buck and Paulette Popowick in Search of the dead, the missing or the suddenly remembered.

And from a small suite in the East Memorial Building, the replies go out across North America. Most contain a cemetery plan with a gravesite carefully marked in red ink by Buck or Popowick.

Thus does the Commonwealth War Graves Commission help people find the resting place of relatives, friends and comrades who died in two world wars. The Commonwealth's war dead amount to 1.69 million men and women, including 110,000 Canadians.

The commission was created in 1917 by the British as First World War casualties began to reach horrifying levels. For the first time, a concerted effort was made to bury the dead in properly maintained cemeteries and to erect memorials to those with no know graves.

Last year, the commission spent approximately \$32 million (Cdn.) to maintain graves and memorials in 140 countries, including such far-flung nations as Argentina, Bulgaria, Fiji and Soviet Union. Most of its 1,300 employees are gardeners and craftsmen.

The Canadian agency, located not far from Parliament Hill, is responsible for all of North America.

"We provide a free service of looking up the burial location of anybody from the British Commonwealth from the First and Second World Wars. We had over 2,000 inquiries last and it's steadily increasing," says John Gardam, assistant secretary-general of the agency.

The busiest times are spring and summer as Canadians planning vacations overseas inquire about the locations of graves. And Buck or Popowick consult the register of the war dead and lists of cemeteries to assemble a brief history of each person's sacrifice.

The 40th anniversary of the D-Day invasion of France brought a deluge of such requests in 1984, as did the 45th anniversary of the Dieppe raid this year.

Gardam sees two other reasons for the growing interest in the war dead.

VETS TRAVELLING

"More and more Second World War veterans are retiring and travelling. So they are going back for the first time since the war and they want to look up where their friends are buried," he said in an interview.

"The other thing is there's a phenomenal, continuing interest in family trees. Ever since the TV program Roots, people have become more and more interested in their ancestors."

Similar information is provided about Korean War and peacetime military deaths although this is, officially beyond the commission's scope. The staff go that extra mile to make it as easy as possible for the war dead to be remembered.

"Rather than giving them the bureaucratic runaround, if we've got the information, we provide it," Gardam said.

The agency tends not only the memories but the graves of the war dead as well. From spring until fall, Graham and secretary-general Mike Newell are constantly on the road, visiting more than 3,000 cemeteries in Canada where 18,000 servicemen and servicewomen are buried.

These military personnel died at a nearby base or were killed elsewhere in Canada and sent home for burial. Their graves are maintained with a devotion approaching reverence.

"What Mike and I do is clean up the headstones. We carry a cleaning kit and get down on our hands and knees and scrub them clean because we are only going to see that stone once every 10 years," Gardam said.

With just two men doing the fieldwork, the agency relies on the Royal Canadian Legion, municipalities and other organizations to keep up appearances between visits. The agency also has maintenance agreements with some cemeteries across Canada.

If a headstone is broken or missing, a local company is hired to install a replacement. Incorrect spellings are changed.

Letters

Story lists incorrect fire code

Dear Sir:
 Re: Woodstove Safety Article, Wednesday, September 23, 1987.

It is with interest that I read your article regarding wood stove installation and safety information in last week's Real Estate Outlook insert.

To see such articles now and again in the newspapers is very encouraging to Fire Prevention Bureaus. Knowing that somebody else recognizes the importance of fire and life safety is very rewarding and satisfying.

However, I feel I must identify a piece of information which may tend to mislead the readers of your paper.

The two paragraphs at the end indicating "installation must be in accordance with guidelines established by the National Fire Safety Association (NFFA)" is an American Standard not applicable to Canada.

Solid Fuel Burning Appliances, Equipment and their installation must be in accordance with a Canadian Standard, namely CAN3-B365-M84, "Installation Code for Solid Fuel Burning Appliances and Equipment" and the Ontario Building Code.

Your assistance in clarifying this matter to your readers if possible would be very much appreciated.

Sincerely,
 David Ford,
 Fire Prevention Officer.

Angered at parking fine

Dear Sir:
 In this day and age, I am very pleased that there is a growing awareness to the needs of the physically disabled; i.e. Handicapped Parking Spots.

As a disabled person, it angers me greatly when able-bodied people use those parking facilities. They usually do not get caught and fined for it. What happened to me on Oct. 2 takes the cake.

I used the wheel-chair parking spot located behind Main St. downtown. When I returned to my van I was ticketed \$25 for parking there. The van has a wheelchair sticker in plain view on the back window. Also I use my wheelchair when driving, so there is no seat on the drivers side of the van.

I called the Halton Regional Police, Georgetown Division, and was told to call the Town Hall, Parking Offences Dept. I called there and was told that I had to come down in person to the Town Hall with a note from my Dr. proving that I am a Quadraplegic. You only have to look at me to see that I am handicapped. Is this not proof enough? By coming down with my doctor's note I would then be registered as a handicapped person in Halton Region. What if I lived in another Region and I was just visiting Georgetown? Would I be liable to pay the ticket just because I parked my van in a spot that I am entitled to?

The really stupid thing about this is, I can't even enter the Town Hall to prove my handicap, note or no note, because it is not wheel-chair accessible.

One Step Forward And Two Steps Back!

Yours truly,
 Ralph Borekman

Two's a Crowd

By BILL BUTTLE

