

Halton Hills Outlook

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Their Outlook

Political bellringers

By the time this sees print, the bellringing episode at Queen's Park may be over.



Queen's Park

By Derek Nelson
Thomson News Service

Or it may not be. In either case, it bodes ill for the future of the current sitting of the legislature. Bellringing is a last gasp tactic of an opposition party. It is the final means of protest by those out of power against those who control the legislature.

Bellringing is a refusal by an opposition party to appear for a recorded vote. The party ignores the bells that are rung to warn MPPs a vote is about to be taken. By convention, in Ontario, that vote cannot be called until all three party whips are present.

It is a useful but extreme tactic. As long as the bells ring, nothing gets done.

The Liberals used it against the then-Conservative government in 1982 in a protest against treasurer Frank Miller's "puppies and pizza" budget.

In his first budget after the Conservatives won a majority in 1981, Miller broadened the sales tax - adding such things as puppies, pizza, tampons and other items traditionally exempt.

In (supposed) outrage, the opposition Liberals, led by David Peterson, walked out and allowed the bells to ring all weekend.

SUCCESSFUL

As a political tactic, it was highly successful. The Liberals won front-page headlines for their stance.

But it was purely a tactic. There was no background rancor between the parties. The Grits were just being clever, and successfully so.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said for the New Democratic Party this spring.

There would have been something deliciously ironic in watching the Liberals hoist on their own petard as the opposition protested not just the expansion of the sales tax, but its increase to eight per cent from seven.

But, instead, the NDP chose to take a hike over the Sunday shopping issue rather than the budget.

Or so they say.

The NDP's current demand (as of this writing) is that the government agree to province-wide, open-ended ("every" interested group having a say) hearings on the matter.

Mind you, this is a retreat from a few days ago, when they had three non-negotiable demands, although it puts them back where they started - with one such demand.

But one doubts that the opposition reasoning in this case is as strictly political as the Peterson walkout of six years ago. Peterson sought publicity, not power.

The contrast with the NDP is startling. Aside from the absurdity of open-ended hearings on anything, it isn't the function of the opposition to set the agenda. That, in the final analysis, belongs to the government.

One has to look a little deeper to find the trigger for the NDP's on-the-surface silliness.

It revolves around the mood and tone of this place, the general atmosphere in which people go about doing the public's business.

When the mood is surly and bitter, everything suffers. When it is light and upbeat, matters go smoothly.

Two's a Crowd

By BILL BUTTLE



Would you quit anticipating?

Tools of the trade

When they want to try to push, pull or dampen the economy, federal governments have two tools at their disposal - fiscal and monetary

governor of the Bank of Canada. By tightening fiscal policy, the Ontario government may well rein in that troublesome inflation that is threatening the rest of the country with high interest rates.

Why, then, are economy watchers so unhappy about Ontario's move?

One reason may be that Mr. Crow was wrong in saying that inflation - and interest rates - come from Ontario; in fact, they come from the United States, where inflation is gaining force.

Combining American financial troubles with Ontario's tax grab could plunge the country into recession.

Another reason may be the slowness with which tax hikes affect the economy. Over the past decade or so, only dramatic changes in fiscal policy - capital gains tax, Ontario's real estate speculation tax, the National Energy Program - have brought swift change, none of it good.

BRIGHTSIDE

Still, Canadians outside of Ontario can hope that the depressing effect the Liberal tax grab will have on the provincial economy will set the country's monetary minds at ease, and Mr. Crow will feel less inclined to bring his monetary policy tool to bear on an already faltering economy.

If, on the other hand, this crimping of the Ontario economy does not help Ottawa's policy makers, Mr. Crow, and even Finance Minister Michael Wilson, will have lost their credibility as independent policy makers.

If in fact our national economy is made in the U.S.A., Canadians will begin to wonder what's the use of supporting a huge federal policy arm whose policies are largely ineffectual.

For people who live in Ontario, the situation is worrisome. It reminds one of past attempts by governments, federal and provincial, to raise taxes and increase spending on social programs after a long economic boom, as if they forgot how quickly boom can turn to bust.

Your Business



By DIANNE MALEY
Business Analyst
Thomson News Service

policy. Fiscal policy concerns the government's power to tax; monetary policy the supply and cost of money or credit.

In this age of burgeoning budget deficits, fiscal policy has been all but lost to North American governments, leaving interest rates as the main stopping and starting device for the economy.

Raising taxes is seen as dangerous and counter-productive, given the need of North American industry to rebuild and compete in fiercely competitive world markets. Lowering taxes is impossible, given the size of the federal deficit.

Lately, the men who control Canada's monetary policy have been squeezing the money supply and forcing up interest rates. The reason, they say, is that inflation in central Canada, particularly Ontario, is gaining new force.

Raising interest rates in a country like Canada, where regional differences are striking, can be dangerous to the economy's health. Surely if Ontario's boom threatens to spill beyond its boundaries, governments should look for some other tool to contain it - fiscal policy, for example.

SHOULD BE GOOD

With this in mind, it is interesting to note the response to the Ontario government's great 1988 tax grab, introduced in the province's budget. While Ontario plans to continue spending freely, the government says it intends to apply its sales tax increase to the annual deficit, cutting it substantially over the months to come.

This should be good news for the rest of Canada, and for John Crow,

Terror on Trafalgar

Halton Regional Police have their hands full attempting to keep roads in Halton Hills safe. Now they can add one more problem on Trafalgar Road to their list.



Staff Comment

By BRIAN MACLEOD

A report came in of a collision on Trafalgar Road south of Stewarttown Tuesday morning, so I was sent packing in search of pictures and a rundown on what happened.

After a futile 40 kilometre search, I stopped at Cargo Gas Station on the west side of Trafalgar Road in Ashgrove to get that nasty orange needle above the E. The station manager told me of the head-on collision down the road.

Another futile search - the accident had been cleaned up - and it was back to the office. On the way back, that same station manager, Steve Bennett, waved me in to his station.

"You got a minute?" asked Mr. Bennett.

Such a question always raises a reporter's curiosity level. Mr. Bennett went on to explain what he called a potentially fatal situation that exists on the corner of Trafalgar Road and Sideroad 10.

The speed limit on Trafalgar Road at Ashgrove is 60 kilometres per hour.

You don't have to be there long to realize that's a dream.

But Mr. Bennett, who took over the station manager's position just over a month ago, seemed genuinely concerned about a potential high speed crash at the intersection.

Cars are passing each other on Trafalgar Road all the way into Ashgrove, he said.

Cars pulling onto Trafalgar Road from Sideroad 10, will check for on-

coming traffic, but they are not used to looking for cars coming at them in their lane, said Mr. Bennett.

"It's just a matter of time before someone gets killed here," he said. "They fly through here on the way to work in the morning," he added.

"This place is a zoo." Two weeks ago a "fluke" accident occurred at the intersection which resulted in one car crashing into a house, said Mr. Bennett.

Tuesday morning, one car pulling onto Trafalgar Road, missed just such a collision with a bus by no more than 20 seconds but the driver didn't even know it, he said.

One lady driving a car passed a school bus near the intersection and just a few seconds later a car pulled out onto Trafalgar Road from Sideroad 10 without checking for oncoming traffic in his lane, said Mr. Bennett.

"There shouldn't be anybody coming towards you on your side of the road," he said.

"You're not supposed to pass through here."

Mr. Bennett said police rarely sit right at the intersection for radar traps.

And it's cars, not trucks which cause most of the problems with passing, he said.

Lights might not be necessary, just increased enforcement of passing regulations at Ashgrove, said Mr. Bennett.

A police spokesperson at 11 Division in Georgetown said Trafalgar Road is patrolled heavily (I can testify to that. I was nailed with a speeding ticket on the road myself.) But passing at Ashgrove is a new problem in police record books, she said.

Nevertheless, police are now aware of the problem and motorists should heed the advice of Mr. Bennett.

No one wants to be the first on the scene of a tragic accident, least of all Steve Bennett.

Singing for life

Go ahead, sing in the shower - even if others in your household cover their ears. A recent study suggests that the more you sing, the longer you may live.

Research conducted by Kathleen A. McCormick, Ph.D. of the Gerontology Research Centre, National Institute on Aging, and the University of Maryland in Baltimore, reveals that professional opera singers have stronger chest wall muscles and that their hearts pump blood better than those of otherwise normal non-singing adults. This may help explain why professional singers often outlive non-singers by 20 years or more. Her advice to all of us is "sing our way to healthy lungs."

Dr. McCormick examined lung and heart function during sustained deep, or abdominal breathing in 20 members of the New York Opera Company who were between 29 and 65 years of age. Some of the singers smoked and some never engaged in physical conditioning exercises. Regardless of these factors, the group as a whole were able to maintain diaphragmatic breathing with large lung volumes during testing.

Throughout the tests, their hearts worked more efficiently in pumping blood and their heart rate was lower than that in a group of young non-singers, all under 20 years of age. "The cardiopulmonary differences were similar to those seen between conditioned athletes and untrained subjects during exercise testing," Dr. McCormick said.

Normally, heart and lung function decline with age in most adults. This decline is accelerated in people who smoke and those who live a sedentary lifestyle. According to Dr. McCormick, the results of this study indicate that the decline can be slowed down by singing.

"Singing is a conditioning exercise of the muscles of respiration," says Dr. McCormick. "It very efficiently tones up the chest wall muscles in a manner similar to swimming, rowing and yoga."

Dr. Robert Hyland of the Wellesley Hospital in Toronto and past president of the Ontario Thoracic Society, the medical section of the Lung Association, concurs that regular intense singing may be an effective way to condition your breathing muscles.

"As with any body muscle, regular exercise of the breathing muscles allows them to perform more efficiently without the tendency to fatigue," Dr. Hyland states.

Specific exercises aimed at training the respiratory muscles have been shown to be of benefit in patients with cystic fibrosis. "Singing might be a way of achieving the same goal," says Dr. Hyland.

The Lung Association is dedicated to the control and prevention of all lung disease. Sing the songs you love with a strong voice - and keep on singing. Lungs are for life.