

the HERALD

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Our best to you

Amid all the hoopla that has become known as "the commercialization of Christmas" you can still see the true spirit of the season shining through.

You may just have to look for it a little closer, but it's there.

It's in the faces of the people you pass on the streets as they go about their busy Christmas shopping. There are smiles when other times of the year they are less affordable.

It's in the air with the sounds of Christmas carolling and the Yuletide music that we somehow never grow tired of, year after year.

It's in the religious pageantry of Christmas, that retells the story of why we celebrate this time each year.

And of course, it's in the excitement we can sense in the children. Even the youngest, who in past years have not realized what this is all about, are coming to the realization that this is something big.

The heart of any Scrooge melts when he lets himself see the joy in the faces of children, because the children carry the message.

Enjoy this festive season to the fullest. There's nothing else any time of the year that can create such magic.

From all of us, to all of you, a very Merry Christmas and the best in 1989.

Reflections

Staff Comment

By BRIAN MACLEOD

In the past 12 months, enough has happened in this relatively quiet town of 35,000 people to give a reporter like myself a chance to cover virtually every conceivable type of story.

Some reflections.
January - The Dr. Jack Ford appeal resumed. I sat through two sessions totalling seven days taking in a staggering amount of highly technical information. After my first day at the hearings, I had 70 pages of notes to siphon through.

February - The six-week old strike at Curwood Packaging was settled. The strike was the first of its nature - both lengthy and at times confrontational - in recent years in town.

March - The Ontario Hospital appeals board released a 24-page decision calling gynecologist and obstetrician Dr. Jack Ford a "significant threat to the community" and backed up the Georgetown hospital's decision to remove his privileges. A column I wrote following the hearings brought some interesting phone calls. The column in essence said the verdict couldn't be denied, but the hearings were flipped because Dr. Ford had to present his case first. Included in those calls was one from a doctor, who disagreed, and one from Dr. Ford, who agreed with the backwards hearings observation.

April - I sat stunned at my desk as Eco Logic's Dr. Douglas Hallett admitted that should the Acton dump go ahead and not cause any significant environmental problems, businesses might look at other Halton Hills quarries as potential dumpsites. He made the comment about 4 minutes into an interview that until then, had gone nowhere.

May - 150 workers of the CAW at Standard Products went back to work after a seven-week strike. It was the longest in Georgetown up to that point. But 270 CAW members at Smith and Stone, stayed off the job.

Halton Regional Police recovered \$17,000 worth of guns and ammunition stolen from a sporting goods store in Milton. Police thought one or more of the guns was used in a robbery of the Main Street Canada Trust branch.

SNAFU® by Bruce Beattie



"All I want is a hacksaw so I can escape from debtor's prison..."

MPPs deal with a sensitive issue

From the hush in the legislature as NDP Leader Bob Rae asked the question you could tell it was a sensitive matter.

Normally, there is heckling and barking galore during Question Period at Queen's Park.

But not while Rae was asking Solicitor-General Joan Smith about the shooting death of Michael Lawson, 17.

The black teenager was killed by police Dec. 8 in Peel Region just west of Toronto while he was driving a stolen car.

But the incident itself is only the tip of the iceberg.

There are several bigger issues here, of which Lawson's death is only the symbol.

Rae dealt with one of them in his question.

It involves what system will be used to handle complaints from citizens about police behavior.

The former Conservative government established a civilian review



Queen's Park
Derek Nelson
Thomson News Service

process for police complaints in Metro Toronto, again partly as the result of the shooting of a black by a policeman.

The argument was that police couldn't be trusted to investigate themselves, even using police from another force.

Under the first commissioner, Sydney Linden, the system appeared to work surprisingly well, and there was widespread expectation that the same process would be extended to the whole province.

That never did happen, although the new Liberal government introduced a bill in 1986 that would

have done so. It became stalled after the Grits decided to re-think their approach.

In Rae's eyes, a key requirement of the Lawson-shooting investigation is that it be done by someone "independent of the police, independent of the Ontario Police Commission, independent of the powers-that-be."

He noted that Lawson's mother has asked for an investigation by Clare Lewis, who is Linden's successor as head of the Metro complaints commission.

Rae endorsed that idea, "in order to give the family somewhat to go that is independent, somewhere that they can have some confidence in the process, and some confidence in the fairness of the result."

Of course, Rae weakens his own case for an "independent" inquiry by having already concluded the Lawson shooting incident makes "no sense to me or to a great many other people."

And the problem with using Lewis is that Toronto police are in almost open revolt against his judgments and decisions.

It is this police skepticism about Lewis that is going to create doubts about the fairness of Solicitor-General Joan Smith's just-

announced task force on police and visible minorities.

It remains to be seen what specific terms of reference the task force will be given, and how it will interpret them.

But it is quite clear from the comments of some of the self-proclaimed black community leaders who've become involved in the Lawson case - and where nothing short of murder charges will satisfy them - that they'll see it as putting the police on trial.

In short, the whole issue of whether police used excessive force in the Lawson incident is now complicated by racial politics. And it is racial politics that will be the true mandate of the task force.

Police shootings are difficult enough when the dead person is white, as the current and controversial inquest into the OPP shooting death near Windsor indicates, but once color is injected, it takes on an added dimension.

One hopes that this task force won't degenerate into just another knee-jerk, "black-as-victim" morality play, but actually will seriously examine some of the broader racial questions involving crime and the police.

Toronto business man takes over PTL assets

The bizarre and sleazy affair of Jim and Tammy Bakker and the PTL Club has taken a decisive turn, with the bankrupt club's assets winding up in the hands of Toronto businessman Stephen Mernick.

Mr. Mernick, whose deal with the bankruptcy trustees has been on and off more than once over the past few months, paid \$65 million (U.S.) in cash recently for the PTL assets. They include undeveloped land in North Carolina, a Christian theme park - a sort of Disneyland for fundamentalists - and the television station that once broadcast the Jim and Tammy show.

Mr. Bakker stepped down from the PTL ministry last summer after admitting to a sexual liaison with Jessica Hahn, a church secretary. Since then, some of Mr. Bakker's male associates have confessed to similar encounters with the disgraced evangelist.

But the story doesn't stop there. Last week, Mr. Bakker and two of his associates were indicted on 24 counts of mail, tax and wire fraud, and on charges that they pocketed millions of dollars of their followers' donations.

DISRESPECTFUL DISTANCE
No wonder Mr. Mernick, aged 34, is trying to distance himself from the PTL affair, doing his best to elude reporters who want to play up the more sensational aspects of his purchase. That Mr. Mernick is an Orthodox Jew has led people to speculate about what he might do with the television ministry. Will he ask the Bakkers to come back? one reporter asked.

Not likely, I would say, although Mr. Mernick is silent about his future plans. To him, the purchase simply was a good deal, like the former Firestone Tire plant in Hamilton, which he bought last summer.

Originally, Mr. Mernick offered \$115 million for the PTL assets, \$50 million in cash. But the bankruptcy judge turned his offer down, saying it would be too easy for him not to pay the rest. Last month, Judge Rufus Reynolds held an auction for the assets at which no one made a bid. "I wanted to get them while they had the fever," the disappointed judge said at the time.

Your Business Diane Maley Thomson News Service

Mr. Mernick was not the only Canadian sniffing around the PTL assets. Vancouver businessman Peter Thomas, founder of the Century 21 real estate franchise in Canada, had been in the running until recently. Mr. Thomas appears to have been knocked out of the bidding when a deal to sell his share in Century 21 to his partner fell through, sparking a lawsuit.

Another Toronto businessman, Michael Karas, dropped out of the bidding on Tuesday, the day before Mr. Mernick made his winning bid.

RAISES QUESTIONS

The whole unsavory affair raises questions about TV evangelists who solicit money, indeed beg for it, from their viewers. Americans tend to be good-natured about corruption, expecting it at every turn in the road. But no doubt many Canadians have been hit by the Bakkers as well. Are the viewers alone to blame?

When the PTL assets went on the block, Mr. Bakker's supporters made a big fuss about trying to buy them back. They called the man who stepped in to run the TV ministry an agent of the devil and the delay in concluding the sale a sign from God.

I'm all for freedom of speech, but should people like this be given unfettered access to the airwaves? Surely regulators should take some responsibility for allowing the likes of the Bakkers to prey on unsuspecting television viewers.

The question is not religious freedom but debasement of religion and exploitation of the old, the sick and the weary, the lonely and lost souls who hope to buy their ticket to heaven by showering people of questionable virtue with money.

Whatever Mr. Mernick does with his new property will be a tremendous improvement.

O holy NIGHT

May God bless you and keep you in the circle of His precious love now and forever. Have a wonderful Christmas season.

Season's Greetings

Citizens' forum

A youngster's wish becomes a reality

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Patrick and I am 16 years old. I have a terminal illness called Kugeiber Wellander, a form of Muscular Dystrophy.

I live with my parents, my brother Eric, and my two sisters Josee and Sylvie. Sylvie also has muscular dystrophy.

I fight every day with this disease but I love life and I will accept whatever comes my way. Everyone in my family has helped me cope with my disease, especially the day-to-day obstacles that I must go through being in a wheelchair that folds into a bed (like a stretcher).

In spite of my handicap, I do my studies at home for my health prevents me from returning to school.

My greatest hobby is my comic book. I have worked for two and a half years to make this comic book and it is my life's work.

It is something that I have done myself from start to finish, and it is something I can leave behind me when I am gone, as "my accomplishment."

I do hope that I will live for a very long time, but I also realize what this disease can do to a person for I have lived with it for many years.

I have had a special dream and thanks to A World of Dreams Foundation Canada, it has come true.

In October, Natalie Villeneuve of the Muscular Dystrophy Association in Montreal contacted A World of Dreams to ask them if they could fulfill my dream. Natalie spoke to the President, Deborah Sims, and within five minutes Deborah called me and we discussed my dream. She said sure, we would love to do it. I couldn't believe it for I had tried so many times with other companies, and nothing was done.

The hardest thing for me to do was to send Deborah my comic book, but she promised she would guard it with her life. Within one week Deborah called to say that she had spoken with McDonald's Restaurants in Toronto and they had given her the name of a company who was also non-profit, and the publisher of children's magazines, Owl and Chicadee. The Young

Naturalist Foundation had agreed - they would publish my comic book. The following week, the greatest news was given to me - Coles Bookstores across Canada would sell my comic book - I couldn't believe this had all happened within two weeks after speaking to Deborah.

This is the most important event in my life and I wanted to share it with all of you for a few reasons. I told Deborah that I wanted to do a lot of publicity for I want people to buy my comic book. I want to hopefully raise money for my family. It would mean so very much to me to be able to give them something for a change and possibly for me to be a little more independent, as all sixteen year olds like to be.

The other reason is that I want to give money to A World of Dreams, so they can fulfill dreams for terminally, critically and chronically ill children in my name.

Having a dream come true gives you hope, and makes you happy, at a time when you need it most.

I have worked so hard on this comic book and I want other kids to have the enjoyment of reading it. I also want other handicapped children, no matter what their disease is, to know that if I could do this, then they could also achieve something.

Some of us do not have our lifetimes to achieve our goals, make a name for ourselves, and that is why it is so important to do what we can, with whatever handicap we have. "NOW"

If anyone of you out there are reading my letter, please help me fulfill my dream and please buy my comic book. Realize that even if you are handicapped like me, you can make your dream come true - especially if you have a friend like A World of Dreams.

Call Deborah at World of Dreams if you are lucky enough to be healthy, help them with money and services, but above all, care and give what you can; for first-hand, I can tell you that there is nothing as special as having your dream come true.

Thank you,
Patrick Seguin

Reports provide food for thought



Ottawa
Vic
Parsons

Two government reports released recently provide food for thought if taken together.

One was the annual auditor-general's report, which always gets much publicity because of the embarrassing accounts of how federal finances are mismanaged.

The other received less attention. It was Revenue Canada's publication of Taxation Statistics for the tax year 1988.

Auditor-General Ken Dye, a pleasant man who becomes a tiger when confronted with tales of financial bungling, had a few harsh words for the apparently casual way Revenue Canada goes after delinquent taxpayers.

While there's a need to respect the rights of those taxpayers, he said, there's a danger of going too far in letting the delinquents off the hook.

"Canadians believe in fairness," Dye said. "But fairness also requires that the quiet majority who pay their full taxes on time should not be eventually penalized by having to compensate for those who fail to pay their share."

The Revenue Canada figures showed that about 4,250 persons out of 810,000 earning more than \$50,000 - or about eight per cent - paid no income tax at all in 1988. About 100 of these earned more than \$250,000.

Among taxpayers who earn between \$25,000 and \$50,000, about 9,780 - or about 7.6 per cent - paid no income tax.

SOME IMPROVEMENT
These figures are an improvement over 1985, when nearly 8,000 people who earned \$50,000 and up paid no income tax. Including 250 in the quarter-million-dollar bracket. But it's backsliding from preliminary 1988 figures reported last May which suggested only 5,220 well-off persons escaped the taxman's bite.

Someone just about now is saying: "Aha, this is competing apples to oranges. After all, people who use the rules fairly to escape paying tax are not in the same league as delinquents."

Granted. But Dye's comments ventured further into the realm of perceived fairness, when he said that in referring to non-collection of taxes he was merely touching the surface of a larger problem.

"Our income tax system relies on the voluntary compliance of taxpayers. And, in turn, the continuance of that voluntary compliance rests on the recognition by Canadians that the system is equitable and even-handed."

"If taxpayers begin to sense that others are taking advantage of the system, that perception could have an immense negative impact on the ability of future governments to collect tax revenues."

For some years now, questions have been raised about fairness. How, for example, could huge companies such as Alcan Aluminum and Brascan Ltd. make pre-tax income of about \$308 million and \$187 million in 1988 and not pay a cent of corporate income tax?

TRENDS WORRISSOME

Why has the proportion of Ottawa's revenue from personal income tax been rising over the last 15 years, while for corporate tax it has been sliding downward?

Early on in his term as Conservative leader, Prime Minister Brian Mulrooney was asked about the unfairness of some of the wealthiest Canadians paying no tax.

He responded that this problem would be addressed. They would pay a tax, and it would be a "handcuff" tax.

Finance Minister Michael Wilson seemed to take a somewhat contrary view when he hinted a couple of years back that the wealthy should not be hit too hard with taxes. Canada would be better off with more millionaires, he mused.

(Many Canadians are trying to help Wilson achieve that goal through the lottery route, even though cynics argue that such investments are a tax on stupidity).

But one must give the Tories their due. Wilson has tackled the lingering problem of tax reform. And the goal of that partially-finished overhaul has, officially, been to benefit taxpayers at the lower and middle-income levels.

The Revenue Canada statistics do suggest that government efforts to bring fairness to the tax system may be succeeding. But they also reveal that there's a distance to go yet.