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Editorial

False security

"In a lot of ways, we of the "northern hill country" consider ourselves more fortunate than our urban-bound counterparts in the south of Halton Region.

To a large degree, this feeling is justified. After all, we don't have to battle huge traffic jams as they do in Oakville and Burlington. Rarely are we subjected to the annoyance of vehicles moving at a snail's pace, stop-and-go traffic, and congestion due to collisions.

Here in North Halton we enjoy a freedom the people of the more populated south could only imagine.

But that freedom appears to be taking its toll.

Statistics from Halton Regional Police show that 10 of the 22 fatalities from car accidents during the last year occurred in the North Halton Region.

That comes as a startling revelation when you consider the differences in population between the north and south, and the corresponding differences in traffic volume and flow.

Statistics can often be deceiving. On one hand, we have the RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) statistics saying there are fewer drinking drivers using the roadways. Naturally that's reassuring.

But another set of statistics tells us the number of traffic fatalities in the Region has increased over the previous year. In 1987, there were 15 fatalities. And half of the 1988 fatalities involved alcohol.

There is another side to this though. Of the 22 traffic fatalities, 10 people died on the roads of North Halton - where we've come to feel so secure.

Since there is less traffic, people seem to feel they can choose to travel at whatever speed they wish. Those same lovely country roads we enjoy, away from all the hustle and bustle, are apparently more dangerous than the larger super highways of the south.

We've been lulled into a false sense of security that can prove costly.

Simply slowing down appears to be the only logical - and ultimate - solution.

The tally on couch potatoes

It comes as a bit of a surprise to find that television-viewing in Canada appears to be on the decline.

It's surprising because there is so much television out there to watch now.

According to StatsCan, a recent survey compiled for 1987 showed there was a slight decline in the national average of "couch potatoes," doing what they do best, at 23.7 hours.

Throughout the 1980s, average viewing time for Canadians has been 24 hours. For 1987, Newfoundland led all provinces with 27.7 hours of TV viewing. Take from that what you will.

At the other end of the scale, there's Alberta, which averaged 22.5 hours, to show the least interest in television. What that means, I'm not altogether sure.

And I'll bet you're just dying to find out where we showed up, here in Ontario. Well, we showed the fourth-lowest level of television viewing.

I'm not sure you can draw any serious conclusions from all these statistics. But it's interesting to note the national average hasn't escalated to any great degree



Editor's Notebook

Mike Turner
Herald Editor

over the last several years, despite a far wider variety in television viewing.

It seems like there's a station for everything today - news, weather, religion, sports, shopping... Rumor has it that the next step is to put a Gilligan's Island Network on the air, and I can hardly wait. What the heck, we seem to have everything else.

Television has come a long way over the years. Once was the time when the only argument at home was over which channel you were going to watch. That's because there were only two to choose from.

Life was so much simpler then. If you were really fortunate, you had an antenna and could pick up another station or two. Now the number of channels available has

PCs can really have their say

How would you like to join a political party and know you'd have a vote for its next leader, not just for some delegate who'll choose that leader?

The odds favor the Ontario Progressive Conservatives offering you that kind of option after their next convention, scheduled (at the moment) for Feb. 11.

In theory, as many as 1,000 Tories will be gathering to discuss possible amendments to the party constitution.

In reality, that normally dry document might just be ignited by the passion being aroused over the proposed changes to it.

The main bone of contention is how to elect the party's new leader, an event scheduled for either autumn, 1989, or spring, 1990.

It is a two-level debate. Up front is the high ground, where the principle of involving as many people as possible in the selection process is acknowledged to be everyone's goal.

At a different level are the questions of who will be leader, and how and where those jockeying for advantage see the party going.

Open conventions are unpredictable. On the other hand, they favor good organizations. They may or may not dilute the strength of the small-c conservative rank-and-file.

Names currently being tossed about for leader include party president Tom Long, former leadership candidates Dennis Tim-



Queen's Park

Derek Nelson
Thomson News Service

brell, Roy McMurtry, and Allan Pope, newcomers like MPPs Cam Jackson and Mike Harris and backroomer John Tory.

But it is the vote itself that is proving most fascinating to outside observers. In their two leadership contests of 1984/85 and 1986, the Tories restricted voting to delegates chosen by people who were members of the party on the day the leadership race was called.

This cut off new blood, and won't be allowed to happen again. In addition, almost everyone now favors some kind of universal suffrage for the next leadership convention - one person, one vote, the allowing of every paid-up Ontario Tory to cast a ballot for leader.

Dispute erupts over the best method for accomplishing this, or achieving the closest thing to it.

There are political drawbacks. Without a convention and balloting on the spot, there is none of the (real or manufactured) drama that makes leadership races so interesting to the media, in particular the only branch that really matters anymore - television.

The Parti Quebecois found that

out in Quebec when they held a one-person, one-vote leadership election by mail. It was small news in the media.

No one wants the choosing of the new PC leader to be ignored. It is tough enough nowadays for a third party to make the news in Ontario as it is.

As well, there are major and legitimate mechanical problems about how you conduct a balloting if everyone is to get the vote.

Regional conventions are one answer. Preferential ballots another. Staggered voting a third.

There is a fourth method, which would take longer to implement than the PCs have available before their next leadership vote - but it is a method which I think is the long-term solution. This would be to give party members cards similar to personalized bank cards that are used for instant tellers, except in this case they would register votes from around the province.

It is interesting to note that one of the constitutional reforms being considered at this convention is a centralized membership list, something the party has never had before and something absolutely necessary before a bank card kind of voting could be arranged.

In any case, it is new ground that is being broken here, an attempt to open up the political process to involve as many people as possible.

It may not work. But it is a worthy attempt, and one in which one wishes all the parties were involved.



The tragedy of 1917

By GIL HARDY
Thomson News Service

Buried deep in the Public Accounts of Canada is a small reminder of a tragic and dramatic event that occurred 71 years ago.

The Public Accounts, the annual compilation of federal government spending, details hundreds of millions of dollars in spending. Included is the Halifax 1917 Explosion Pension Account, which contained \$769,491 at the end of the 1987-88 fiscal year on March 31.

The account, made up of cash and securities, pays benefits to the survivors of the worst disaster in Canadian history.

In 1917, Halifax was a busy port and naval base playing a major role in Canada's contribution to the Allied war effort. The First World War was in its fourth year and Britain-bound convoys laden with troops, munitions and supplies often sailed from Halifax.

On Dec. 6, the French steamship Mont Blanc, packed with TNT, explosive acid and benzene collided with the Norwegian steamer Imo. The resulting explosion devastated much of the north end of Halifax, killing 1,800 people and seriously

injuring another 4,000.

The explosion was so powerful that a 1,000-lb. anchor shaft was hurled more than two miles from the scene. Some 6,000 people were left homeless and property damage amounted to \$50 million.

To help rebuild the shattered lives and broken city, the Halifax Relief Commission was created. Public and private money poured in for the injured and the families of the dead.

Some money went to the rebuilding of the city, the rest as compensation to the victims. By 1920, the commission was paying pensions to 1,028 people.

In 1935, there were only 353 receiving monthly instalments. H.D. Clark, the finance department official who now administers the trust account, says the decline occurred partly because some people opted for lump-sum payments.

But old age also has taken its toll. The number of pensioners fell to 117 by 1983 and to just 65 when the commission wound up in 1975.

As of November, there were 32 people still receiving payments. "They are declining by four or five a year," says Clark.