

the HERALD

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Volunteerism : 100

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No, it's not a credit course offered at a high school or community college - but maybe it should be.

It's something Acton offers that a lot of communities could go to school on.

Thursday night, Councillor Rick Bonnette made an astute observation at an open house, designed to beef up interest in the Halton Hills Volunteer Ambulance Service for Acton.

Coun. Bonnette pointed out Acton is traditionally known for being exceptional when a call for volunteers goes up.

It was hoped Thursday's gathering at Acton High School would encourage people to become involved with the facet of the ambulance service initiated six months ago to determine whether a need was warranted for Acton.

A few of the more than 40 people who attended the meeting probably left wondering why they had come in the first place. It was made clear there isn't a lot of remuneration or glory to look forward to by being a member of the volunteer ambulance service.

But those few, along with those who really felt they could make a difference in the wellbeing of their community, were there.

The fact that over 40 people responded when a localized ambulance service for Acton was in jeopardy, says something in itself.

Volunteerism: 100

Compared to the track record of many communities, that represents a 100-per-cent concern for the community.

Stick with the facts



Editor's
Notebook

Mike Turner
Herald Editor

There is much ado these days concerning the survival (slash) war (slash) adventure games proposal.

At the risk of sticking my face in someone's target sights, I'd like to offer a few observations.

First of all, people are going to argue about a lot of things regarding this issue. Eventually it will come down to someone deciding whether this type of operation is too noisy or too dangerous, and infringes on the way of life for those directly affected.

And I'm staying clear of this portion of the discussion completely.

The point I'd like to make is about the game itself. And contrary to what some people may feel, it is only a "game."

I've had the opportunity to play the "survival game" twice before. The first outing I found it exhilarating. The second time some of the novelty was gone, but it was most definitely fun.

And I certainly take exception to someone suggesting I'm some type of warmonger because I enjoy this sort of thing.

For my money, I got a good workout and quite simply had a lot of fun. We all picked up a few welts along the way but no one was seriously hurt.

In essence, it's a chance for grown men (and women, by the way) to act like a bunch of kids. Come Monday we were back at work, just like the rest of the grown-ups.

I can empathize with the people

who are concerned over how such an operation will affect their lifestyle. But try to stick to the real issues.

Don't try to label the people who will "come in" to play the games as a particular type of human being.

Can we assume people who "come in" to the community to buy an animal fur coat all hate animals?

This is certainly a contentious issue, and it will eventually be resolved one way or the other.

But it's important to stick to the facts.

Children pay in debt-ridden countries

By JANET DUVAL
Herald Special

Imagine you have to repay a loan that your parents took on years ago. Imagine that you're having trouble doing so. The bank insists that you sell the food in your cupboards and the hardwood trees on your property to raise the cash, and it wants your children to leave school and go to work to earn more.

It's an unthinkable scenario, and yet it's similar to what is happening all over the Third World, as countries try to repay foreign debts they incurred in the 1970s, now totalling \$1.2 trillion dollars.

Back then, banks were flush with "oil dollars" from the Middle East, and developing countries borrowed them, sometimes for grandiose projects, sometimes for weapons. Sometimes the money simply went into the pockets of dictators like Marcos of the Philippines, who has now deposited the money in his western bank accounts. Meanwhile, it is the poor of those countries who suffer under huge debt

PC leadership race gets rolling

Hamilton-area MPP Cam Jackson kicked off the Ontario Progressive Conservative leadership contest last weekend.

It wasn't official, mind you, but there is no other way to interpret the speech he made to a Tory riding association.

It staked Jackson's tent in what the media call the "right-wing of the party."

That's where most of the rank-and-file are located, but it is conventional wisdom that while being "right-wing" can win you the party leadership, it also guarantees you'll lose the general election to follow.

Still, Jackson seemed undeterred.

He summed up the great dividing line in PC politics as the chasm between the "politics of convenience" and the "politics of conviction."

He was for "conviction," of course, specifically mentioning his vote against rent controls in 1986 - the only vote cast against them in the legislature.

"Claiming that our base of voter support in Metro Toronto was threatened, top Tory advisors pushed us toward the road of convenience," he said.

"But having opposed rent controls all my life, I couldn't change my mind just because some pollster said our Toronto seats were at stake."

He dropped other lines that, if continued into the leadership campaign due to officially begin later this year, will make many ordinary Tories nod their heads in agreement.



Queen's
Park

Derek Nelson
Thomson News Service

These include references to the size of government (too big and costly), Liberal mismanagement (worker's compensation and the auto insurance board), defence of private property (against coming amendments to the trespass act), family values (Sunday a common pause day and the Lord's Prayer to remain in schools) and law and order (a Victim's Bill of Rights and special taxes on criminals).

Jackson's rhetoric was sometimes strong - critical media will undoubtedly call it Bush-league - as when he noted the day passes given to a young offender who is a triple murderer.

PUBLIC WARNING

"Instead of cutting off unescorted day passes for this dangerous offender, the Liberals are busy trying to find out who issued the public warning - so they can fire him."

"That's right. The Liberals are more concerned about a murderer's privacy than public safety."

But he also waxed philosophical, as when suggesting that "to Liberals and socialists, compassion is measured by the number of people receiving handouts. Our party measures compassion by counting the number of people who no longer need handouts."

"Conservatives know that economic growth and job creation are the best social programs government can provide..." and so on.

Jackson isn't alone out there in the leadership wars, mind you, just the first to express his vision in such an open and obvious campaign speech.

Party president Tom Long, whose small-c conservative views are similar to Jackson's and have been widely disseminated for far longer, is also generally considered to be running flat out for the leadership.

Currently, he is touring the province advocating that every party member should get to cast a ballot for the next leader (the so-called one-man, one-vote option), a change in the party's constitution that will require two-thirds support at a constitutional convention to be held here Feb. 11.

It doesn't hurt Long's candidacy to be shaking all those hands - likely again; he did the same tour giving pep talks all through the federal and provincial campaigns as well as before and after becoming president.

Moreover, he's been a key figure in seeking internal party reform, which naturally tends to excite Tories but puts everyone else to sleep.

Some Tories and pundits consider Long the man to beat, but that will likely depend on just how many and how varied his competition.

There are at least another half-dozen possible contenders standing in the wings.



Peace Beat

loads that will probably never be repaid. Many countries have to borrow money simply to keep up their interest payments. Brazil owes \$104 trillion, Mexico \$96 billion. Sudan uses 80 per cent of its export earnings to pay its debts.

Such countries have to export more to the west in order to raise foreign dollars to pay their debts. They must cut expensive social programs such as education and health. Huge rainforests in Brazil, Indonesia, and Ethiopia have been cut for export, at great risk to the earth's environment. Farmers who used to feed their families well, now grow crops for the west, while their children go hungry. All over the Third World, malnutrition and illiteracy are increasing, and the environment is suffering, and there is anger and unrest. "Why," ask the poor, "are we paying for

something we never wanted, projects which were of little or no benefit to us?"

UNICEF harshly condemns the situation. "The rich got the loans and the poor got the debts," says its report, and it's the children who are paying for it with their lives. Some countries have already paid more in interest than the original debt was worth.

Several Georgetown churches are concerned about the situation. Their committee, "Ten Days for World Development," has written to the Chairmen of Canada's major banks, to whom over \$30 billion is owed. They ask the banks to consider the moral and ethical consequences of their loans, and to think about forgiveness or reduction of the loans.

Committee members have also visited some of the local bank managers to talk about the problem. Bankers expressed concern and interest, and offered various suggestions for approaching their own head offices and the public.

They pointed out that foreign loan losses, from countries who are unable to pay right now, have no effect on domestic service charges to bank customers. One manager suggested that banks are anxious to maintain a good public image. If they could be shown to be "good guys" by cancelling or reducing foreign debt, they might do so.

Foreign debt is really everyone's problem. It affects the poor abroad, bank shareholders here, and the health of the whole planet. Bankers are recognizing that full payment of principal and interest will never come, and that "people in rags don't make good customers" for western goods.

Georgetown churches and the "Ten Days" committee are sponsoring a special prayer vigil related to the debt and environment situation, "One Earth," on Sunday, Feb. 5, at 7 p.m. at St. George's Anglican Church. All are welcome for an hour of contemplation, prayer, and special music.