

## Editorial

# Crying foul

Halton councillors are crying foul over the Ministry of Environment's decision to tell the Region to close down Milton's hazardous waste disposal site or face fines.

The MOE has decided that hazardous wastes aren't being handled properly on the site.

Labelled by Milton Councillor Bill Johnson as "the big, bad ministry" the MOE looks to us like the good guy in this case.

What the ministry has done is examine the site, found problems, then issued a notice saying fix them or be fined.

So why the "big bad" MOE?

In fact, several Regional councillors seem to feel slighted by the ministry for simply doing its job.

If a site specially designed for handling hazardous waste isn't working, how can we expect the private sector to put the effort into properly disposing hazardous waste?

If a large corporation had been found improperly disposing hazardous waste, and the MOE issued such an order, we'd all be pointing fingers at that business for polluting the environment.

The Milton depot, which handles waste from all of North Halton, including Halton Hills, must follow the strict guidelines of hazardous waste disposal even better than private companies in order to set a good example.

Coun. Johnson said the MOE is attempting to embarrass Halton by issuing such an order. If Halton is embarrassed, it has only Halton to blame.

Halton Region is a leader in the recycling field and its efforts to divert hazardous waste such as paints, turpentines and bleach bottles away from landfill sites are admirable. But Halton, as a leader, must follow the rules and guidelines of hazardous waste disposal or the whole effort is put to waste.

Instead of creating such a hue and cry about the "big bad ministry," Halton councillors should be saying, "okay, we've got a problem, let's fix it."

No doubt Halton will open the depot again, but in politics unfortunately, we must always listen to a round of deflecting blame before the tough get going.

# Going public



## Editor's Notebook

Brian MacLeod  
Herald Editor

Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson is right. There must be a better process for public meetings now conducted at town council. Councillors argued last week about the public meeting process and whether councillors should be allowed to participate.

They decided to keep a "hands off" approach to public meetings which, while noble, often leads to awkward situations at council meetings.

Currently, the general committee chairperson reads a form calling for an explanation of a proposal by town planners and the applicant. Then, comments from the public asking for clarification are allowed, followed by comments in

favor or opposed to the application. But the ensuing discussion and question and answer period often begs for questions, or at least clarification.

That's where the awkward situations come in. Often members of the public are just left glaring at silent councillors awaiting some sort of direction on issues.

There were good points made in the debate about public meetings. Like the fact that councillors could start "grandstanding" during such debates in front of the public.

However, if each councillor were allowed one, or two clarification questions to the public or town staff during debates, it would leave a better taste in the public's mouth after important meetings.

If you live in an apartment in Halton Hills you may start "blue bagging" it fairly soon. The blue bags are Halton's answer to the blue box recycling program now in place throughout the Region.

Join in the program. You'll help save your own tax dollars.

# Campaign to "raid public purse"



## Queen's Park

Derek Nelson  
Thomson News Service

A well-orchestrated campaign to raid the public purse on behalf of welfare recipients and social workers is under way here.

It began several months ago and has gradually escalated over time, with the climax expected to be a mass rally in front of Queen's Park April 8.

The effort is impressive, the cause terrible.

The campaign supposedly aims at getting the provincial government to implement what is known as the Thomson or SARC report.

This report, from the Social Assistance Review Committee (SARC), chaired by former Family Court Judge George Thomson, took two years of effort and \$3 million to produce.

Although badly organized, poorly thought-out and indifferently written, the report draws hosannas from professional welfare activists.

It calls for a near-doubling (to \$4.4 billion from last year's \$2.3 billion) of the money spent on welfare. The total Ontario budget is \$38 billion.

The SARC report was labelled Transitions, and the theory behind it is that lots more money and more social workers will "help

people help themselves out of the welfare system entirely."

But wouldn't that then end the need for social workers?

Not according to SARC, which believes "that the new program will be a much better one for those who work in it and that the overall result will be additional skilled personnel providing income support and opportunity planning to people in need."

It centres on "opportunity planning" - with a kind of permanent social worker-advocate to help welfare recipients to use the system.

No wonder 150 student social workers turned up here this week to demonstrate. There are good times for them in a future with more dollars. In their own inimitable words, "poverty sucks, so get the bucks."

They, too, are part of the campaign to get the first \$400 million in new cash pumped into the Community and Social Services budget in Treasurer Robert Nixon's May provincial budget.

So, also, is a "march on poverty" that is making its way from Ottawa, Windsor and Sudbury starting points.

### PRESSURE

And the usual other pressures are being applied, ranging from sympathetic newspaper articles about the "poor" to political endorsements - including a surprising announcement of support for SARC from multimillionaire businessman Conrad Black, who usually shows more sense in what

he says.

What makes a lot of the advocates of Big Spending optimistic is that Premier David Peterson and Community and Social Services Minister John Sweeney have already accepted Thomson's conclusions.

They haven't quarrelled with a single one of the report's recommendations or observations, even though it contains plenty to criticize.

It appears the Liberals, reacting to the united front the welfare establishment has put up in support of Thomson's document, believe that it is easier to mouth supportive platitudes than ask any hard questions about the SARC schemes.

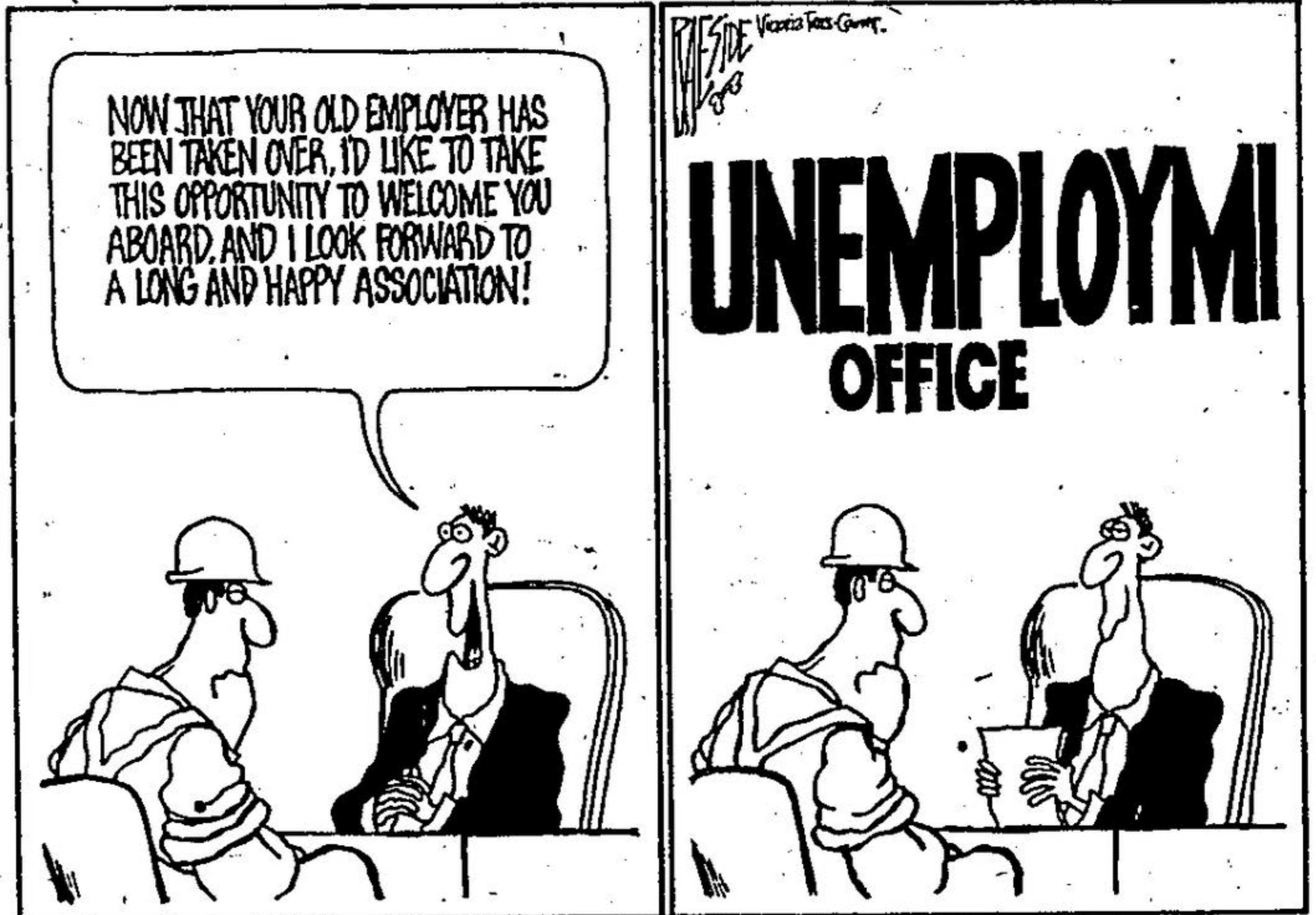
In fact, the only negative comments so far have come from Nixon and Peterson, and these are always couched in terms of perhaps not being able to afford to implement SARC. (Actually, the assumption - or pipedream - is that the federal government will kick in half the new funds.)

But killing SARC by starving it of cash would be a copout.

There are really two fundamental questions that need to be asked. Only one of them is whether we can afford it.

More important is whether we should "afford it."

And a close look at the committee's confused, bureaucratic, legalistic and expensive "solutions" to welfare reform leads to the obvious conclusion that the report should simply be junked.



## LETTERS

# MPs should rescind increase

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter to Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner was filed with the Herald for publication.

Dear Mr. Turner,  
The Hon. Michael Wilson has recently informed us we must accept cuts in social programs and higher taxes when he brings down his budget later this month.

It would make some sense and show good faith on the part of the Honorable Members of Canada's Parliament if the recent increase in salary to themselves was rescinded. After all you yourself said the country should be run on a business basis and when a business has a deficit management does not vote themselves a raise, even for cost of living increases. However this is just what Parliament has done and now ask John Q. Public to take cuts and pay more taxes.

Do you remember when you were with the Toronto Sun and led the protests to Parliament Hill when the Conservative government tried to de-index the Old Age Pension and again when you thought the government was overtaxing us? Things are no different

now. Most pensioners today have come through the depression in the 1930s and were unable to save for their retirement or even have company pensions to augment the old age pension. Many are living on incomes below the poverty level and are even taxed on that. As for your suggestion of deficit bonds, most pensioners are unable to manage on their pensions and are using their savings, if they have any, to get by, so how could they afford to lend the Government their money that they need to live on?

When people see the Government assume some fiscal responsibility by cutting back on their own perks and we have less feeding at the trough, then, perhaps, we might save this great country for future generations.

Put the country on a business basis. When a company is facing bankruptcy, it cuts back at all levels, not just the bottom half. You don't see the top brass taking raises and the working class takes a cut.

Another idea would be for all Members of Parliament to become \$1 a year men for one year with on-

ly minimal expenses paid. But that is hoping for too much. If the government wants the people to willingly bite the bullet, let Parliament set an example by cutting out their own extravagances. Instead of cutting back on the middle and lower class, let the wealthy pay their share by taxing 50 per cent tax on taxable income over \$55,000 instead of 29 per cent.

We pensioners have had to cut back in many ways to be able to afford a few luxuries so why shouldn't our Honorable Members of Parliament cut back too? Put into force an austerity program until the deficit is paid off. All the extras like travelling and entertaining on expense accounts. No more free passes or supposedly fact-finding trips to exotic places when it is wintertime in Canada.

Also, a moratorium should be put into place on all loans and gifts to other countries until such time as we have taken care of our own poor and homeless and our country is back on the black side of the ledger.

Sincerely,  
Florence Bell