

A waiting game

Our political leaders at Halton Region seem to be totally incapable of making a firm decision on the Sunday shopping issue.

Last week Halton councillors not only ignored over 100 applications from retailers asking for Sunday shopping - they ignored everyone else.

Halton's administration and finance committee wants Regional council to petition the province to take back the responsibility for Sunday shopping.

Halton Hills Councillor Rick Bonnette said the Sunday shopping "is going to be a circus no matter how you look at it." He's right.

And our politicians are building the tent.

The Region is not prepared to take a stand on Sunday shopping one way or the other despite being flooded with calls from businesses asking for a decision.

Halton's business manager Brent Kearsse said grocery stores are calling every other day. "Everybody's playing a bit of a waiting game," he said.

It is ridiculous to leave businesses hanging, not knowing when Halton will take a stand.

Now, there's talk of having a referendum. Fine. If our politicians can't make a decision, let the people decide.

Halton Region Chairman Pete Pomeroy is right when he said, "it was a dirty trick" that forced the decision on regions.

The province's decision to pass on Sunday shopping to regions was spineless.

But that doesn't mean municipal politicians can't roll up their sleeves and deal with the issue.

Mr. Pomeroy said a referendum would not represent a majority of people since elections generally don't have a 100 per cent turnout.

But it's those same elections that put our politicians in power. If elections are good enough to elect mayors and councillors, they're good enough to make a decision that those mayors and councillors won't or can't make.

Where poppies grow...



Brian MacLeod
Editor's Notebook

Many of you who tune in to the radio each day will likely have heard that dramatic advertisement for the sports network featuring the Montreal Canadiens.

"On the wall there is a sign," the announcer says, "To you from falling hands we throw The torch; be yours to hold it high."

It's an effective advertisement and it makes us all pay attention.

But perhaps we can put things a bit more into perspective if you were to read the next two lines of the poem from which those words are borrowed:

"If ye break faith with us who die We shall not sleep, though poppies grow In Flanders Fields."

Saturday is Remembrance Day. It's fitting that John McCrae's famous poem "In Flanders

Fields" is featured so prominently in our daily lives.

Earlier this year, during a visit to Europe, I was fortunate to visit several military cemeteries in the region known as Flanders in France. They're impressive. They're well-kept, and every small town seems to have its own way of maintaining their military cemeteries.

And more often than not, people were stopped by the roadside going over rows and rows of crosses or gravestones.

In France, those military cemeteries are treated as national monuments. Most towns have signs pointing the way to the cemetery.

This Saturday at 11 a.m. marks the 70th year of the end of the Great War. The war that inspired the 43-year-old medical officer, a Guelph native, to pen those famous words after a 17-day battle in Ypres in April, 1915.

The war to end all wars didn't. And fighters were back in the trenches a scant 20 years later.

Each year on Nov. 11 we visit cenotaphs, lay wreaths and remember those who died in defence of freedom.

It's important that the youth of today learn their heritage, their beginnings and of the heroic deeds of their forefathers so that we don't fall prey to Lt.-Col. McCrae's words: "If ye break faith with us who die, We shall not sleep, though poppies grow, In Flanders Fields."

Meech Lake is an obsession

Derek Nelson

Queen's Park

Thomson News Service



TORONTO-The obsession here with the Meech Lake accord and Quebec hides another reality: there are other parts to the country.

Almost every day, Meech Lake is an issue of interest among reporters, and Ontario Premier David Peterson is constantly bombarded with questions concerning the latest twist in its epic journey to ratification or rejection.

It is a symptom of the narrow Quebec-Ontario focus of our media that the election of Stan Waters in Alberta as the people's choice for senator went almost unnoticed. Certainly, no one in the media pestered Peterson for his views on the subject.

And yet, it was a watershed event.

Not only was it the first time in Canadian history that common people had a say in who they wanted for senator, which is itself remarkable, but it had two profound symbolic effects.

The first was that all those who ran in the race (and only the New Democrats, who want to abolish the Senate, boycotted it), whether Conservative, Liberal, indepen-

dent or from the new Reform party, endorsed the idea of a Triple-E Senate.

That is a Senate in which the members would be elected, where they would be effective (meaning retain real power) and equal (meaning there would be equal numbers from each province).

It would be a way to give western Canada genuine representation in the federal government, something it currently lacks, dominated as Parliament always is by a Quebec-Ontario alliance.

For westerners, for instance, the test for effectiveness of Senate reform is whether a new Senate could prevent Ottawa ever again imposing something like the National Energy Policy upon objecting western provinces.

The second message sent by the Alberta electorate came in whom they picked. More than 600,000 voted, and 41 per cent of those chose Stan Waters, the Reform party candidate, who finished far ahead of the other candidates.

The Ottawa political establishment is horrified. External Affairs Minister Joe Clark said Waters was an "extremist" and his views were "dangerous." He didn't say what they were, but the news report quoting Clark characterized them as "strong" and "right-wing."

ON BANDWAGON

The Ottawa media establishment is already on the bandwagon, with doyen columnist Marjorie Nichols (for example) calling Waters an "anti-environmentalist, anti-feminist, anti-intellectual boob" who shouldn't be eligible to sit in the Senate.

Actually, so far he sounds good.

What is wrong with "strong, right-wing" views, such as support for a balanced budget, for spending cuts and for an adequate defence, being represented in Ottawa? They aren't today. Besides, anyone who can jolt the cozy little club that is the Ottawa elite (PCs, Liberals, New Democrats and media combined) can't be all bad.

More important, as columnist Don Braid said in the Calgary Herald, Reform's views on matters like Quebec probably reflect the feelings of more than half of all westerners.

Here's a sampling (in quotes), as given by Braid:

One, that all regions of Canada are entitled to "equal status in constitutional and political negotiations." Quebec's demands aren't the only ones that should be considered.

Two, "that freedom of expression is fully accepted as the basis of any language policy." This is the opposite of Quebec's Bill 101, which makes French the only language of public life.

Three, "that every citizen is entitled to equality of treatment by governments, without regard to race, language or culture." This means an end to official favoritism towards Quebec French in federal jobs.

No wonder they consider Reform "extremist."

The blindness of central Canada is nowhere more evident than in Peterson's refusal even to consider Senate reform until Meech Lake is secure.

He declines to stretch the hand of friendship west, at least until the east is satisfied. Too bad.



Organic grains are prairie gold



Rennie MacKenzie

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Thomson News Service

Members of a small western grain co-op think they've discovered a rich new seam in the fields of prairie "gold."

A growing number of producers are making the switch to organic grains for environmental and health-conscious consumers.

Elmer Laird, president of the Canadian Organic Producers Marketing Co-op in Girvin, Sask., reported a five-fold increase in sales of chemical-free grains this year and has asked the Canadian Wheat Board for a separate pool to market and ship organic products.

Laird says the 143 members of the co-op aren't having any problems selling their wheat and oats.

"Our problem is guaranteeing buyers a steady supply," he remarked. But the growing co-op expects that wheat board assistance could give it a much bigger chunk of the organic grains market.

Canadians have been slow to accept the organic grains. "We don't sell a lot in Saskatchewan," Laird commented. However, sales in the co-op's oldest market, Ontario and Quebec, are picking up with renewed interest in oats as a health food. Two large Canadian grain companies are now advertising for organically grown cereal grains.

But Europe is the ripest of all markets. Led by the West Germans, the Europeans are grinding up whatever their own growers can cut in a season and then looking far abroad for more. And they are paying premium prices for the chemical-free grains.

An English miller, who is now one of the co-op's biggest customers, told Laird that the German consumer market for organic cereal products is a year ahead of Britain's, and Britain is running a year ahead of Canada.

The co-op was formed six years ago after a group of organic

growers were brought together in an effort to meet a West German buyer's demand for 75,000 bushels of their wheat. The deal fell through, but the growers, sensing potential in a marketplace in which 20 per cent of consumers report allergies to food additives, preservatives or chemicals, acquired a provincial charter to operate as a co-op and set tight standards for membership.

Two years ago, the co-op opened a processing and cleaning plant at Girvin. It has since been expanded to include a stone mill and retail store. The plant is working at capacity and most of the grain ordered by foreign buyers is processed by commercial cleaners before being loaded into sealed, plastic-lined, 20-tonne containers.

Laird believes Prairie farmers have a good edge in the international market. The western soils aren't laden with mercury, lead and other metals spewed by heavy industry.

However, he feels western growers, especially those in Saskatchewan, are hooked on chemicals and apply heavier doses on their fields than farmers in other regions of the country.