

# Chasing chasers

Police officers across Ontario may have to ease up on the gas pedal in the new year.

A new directive from the province says high-speed police chases are only acceptable if the suspect is believed to have committed a criminal offense.

In other words, if a police officer pulls a driver over for speeding, and the driver tries to flee, the police officer can only maintain the chase until he or she has obtained the licence plate number and identified the driver.

While it is the irresponsible actions of the motorists that can bring on death or serious injury, such restraint is probably for the better.

It's true we may see more drivers trying to flee, but most people stop when the red lights start flashing behind them. And it really isn't worth a death to haul someone in for running a stop sign.

Sergeant Ken Bonham of the Halton Regional Police force said one of the directives in the new regulations means that police must take a special driving course before they can become involved in a police chase. That directive may mean experienced police officers will have to sit idly by while a criminal flees.

Obviously police forces across the province will have to step up their driver training programs.

In Halton Region last year police chased cars 33 times, resulting in six injuries.

Across the province there were 1,454 high-speed chases which resulted in eight deaths and more than \$1.9 million damage.

It's important to remember that other innocent motorists' lives are put in jeopardy during high-speed chases.

However, police will have to keep a close watch on incidents of high-speed chases. If the number of drivers fleeing increases dramatically, then police will have no option but to start chasing them down.

# Firing up Christmas



Brian MacLeod  
Editor's Notebook

Ah yes, it does indeed pay to do your Christmas shopping early. I learned that lesson Sunday at the expense of my better half's father.

Several weeks ago Karen and I picked up a fire extinguisher for her father - he who works patiently for hours on end around a wood stove in the garage.

A fitting gift for him, right? Um, well, he may have to wait a while.

You see we "borrowed" his gift on Sunday. Really.

Only, it's not exactly something we can re-wrap.

It's like this; the wood stove at Karen's place - an old stone farmhouse - can be our best friend on freezing winter nights, or our worst enemy when it decides to act up.

Sunday, it acted up. Big time.

As I was otherwise occupied in some far off corner of the house, I heard the fire detector spring to life with that familiar and somewhat annoying squeal.

Naturally, I just assumed Karen was cooking supper. (No really,

the smoke detector goes off every time she whips up one of her dishes. That's how I know it's time to hit the table).

Anyway a faint, high-pitched voice yelling, "Fire! Fire!" followed the squealing of the smoke detector.

Okay, so she's making toast again, I thought. (It's hard to believe but Karen - not satisfied with merely burning toast - has actually managed to set fire to toast before. It's quite a sight to see flames licking at the side of a toaster.)

A quick trip to the dining room proved otherwise.

The chimney was glowing bright orange in several spots and it was quite apparent that flames were shooting out into places where flames shouldn't be. That, accompanied by a loud thud, set us into action.

Quick-thinking Karen dashed through the next room, sorted through the bundle of Christmas presents and began ripping off the paper.

Uh huh. Never mind the clothes, the computer, the television, the stereo, the fridge or the stove, just being opened presents.

This seemed strange.

Alas, out came what was to have been her father's fire extinguisher.

She threw it my way and yelping "here, I don't know how to use it."

Gee, thanks.

And the moral of the story is - always have a fire extinguisher hanging on the wall? Nah, just do your Christmas shopping early.

# McLaughlin's honeymoon over



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Audrey McLaughlin's honeymoon as leader of the New Democratic Party has been well-deserved so far - particularly with her moving tribute to victims of the Montreal Massacre - but it won't last forever.

The 53-year-old Yukon MP, with only two years of parliamentary experience under her belt before she succeeded Ed Broadbent, probably won't have to wait too long before the fur starts flying in her direction. If she is going to preside over a growing party - or even keep the 43-member caucus from diminishing - she has her work cut out for her.

The party she inherited in Winnipeg Dec. 2 from Mr. Broadbent - "it's all yours, Audrey" - is not a neat, little, unified movement that will flourish without tender loving care. It may even require some tempestuous care from time to time.

What everyone agrees on is that the New Democratic Party is not in the best of health on a national

basis. Behind the scenes, there are divisions and cracks that were not mentioned by the various leadership contenders as they sought the honor of "building a new Canada through this great social democratic movement."

## SOME OBVIOUS

Before this can happen, Ms. McLaughlin is going to have to match up some fairly serious rifts in the labor movement - split as never before over a leadership race. Canadian Auto Workers President Bob White - a very influential fellow - threw all his weight behind the winner, while Shirley Carr, head of the Canadian Labor Congress, was parading around the convention floor with candidate Dave Barrett.

Union members went in all directions.

Then there is the party's problem with youth - or lack of it. Not since the NDP was founded back in 1961 has there been such a dearth of young delegates at a national convention. Instead of taking over the convention, as they sometimes threaten to do, young people had to be searched out this time.

It was, for all practical purposes, a meeting of the middle-aged - and the policy debates, with their lack of radicalism, simply reinforced this. Without a new injection of young blood, the NDP is becoming another middle-of-the-road party, sharing many of its objectives with the Tories and Grits.

Somehow, Ms. McLaughlin is going to have to make the NDP a

comfortable political home for young people. And it won't be as easy as during the height of the Cold War, when the party was in the forefront of the disarmament movement, delighted to speak out against both American and Soviet nuclear weapons.

"Ban the bomb," shouted one elderly delegate in Winnipeg. All he attracted were a few snickers and curious stares.

## BIGGER PROBLEM

Apart from devising new policies and ideas to distinguish the NDP from the other parties, Ms. McLaughlin can't wait too long in coming to terms with the NDP's rather unique problem in Quebec.

After Ed Broadbent had endorsed the Meech Lake accord - along with a vast majority of his caucus in the last Parliament - the Winnipeg delegates clearly watered down this approval.

After debating some complicated proposals, delegates approved a resolution that called for changes in the accord, without saying whether these changes must come ahead of the accord's ratification. It was the best compromise available.

What is clear is that the majority of Quebec delegates thought the party had turned its back on Meech Lake - something they did not like.

And with a Chambly byelection coming up on Feb. 12, the issue becomes rather important, rather quickly. Phil Edmonston, the consumer advocate, wants to run for the NDP in the riding, and he has been given pretty good odds at winning.



# Provinces haven't buried GST



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The idea of a unified national sales tax got a slight boost last week when Finance Minister Michael Wilson met his counterparts from the provinces.

It would be more than a little rash, however, to predict that a joint federal and provincial levy on goods and services will be a feature of Canada's short-term economic landscape.

A few grunts of modest encouragement from provincial treasurers, who not long ago described the whole idea as an unacceptable monster, suggest only that the feeble concept is not yet planted two metres down.

While admitting that there's no chance of provincial participation

by the target date of Jan. 1, 1991, for the planned goods and services tax (GST), Wilson said the door is open to future co-operation.

Some reports left an impression that the provinces were more open than ever to a unified national tax. This seems odd, since the two levels of government batted the idea around for 18 months before Wilson declared last April that Ottawa would go it alone and the devil take the others.

Indeed, the majority (read: Tory) Commons finance committee report on the GST quoted a former Ontario assistant deputy minister who had worked on the idea as saying a federal-provincial working group had been close to a deal but just ran out of time.

"These meetings were characterized by a level of goodwill, energy and constructive advice that certainly was superior to anything else I saw in 20 years on the federal-provincial scene," said the official, L.R. Leonard.

One must conclude that description hasn't held true since Wilson made his unilateral move last spring. Still, last week's mood seemed marginally upbeat.

A single sales tax would satisfy

one large group of opponents to Wilson's GST, notably small businesses which have to collect the taxes. But, because a unified tax could cause great inconvenience to the provinces, giant hurdles remain to be overcome.

Wilson seemed content that a process has been set in motion which will allow officials from both levels of government to discuss the idea.

A less sanguine view was offered by Dick Johnston, Alberta's treasurer, who maintained in an interview with CTV that the provinces haven't budged.

Alberta is the sole province without a retail sales tax and the only jurisdiction that even federal officials admit would lose ground with a GST. So, it's understandable that Johnston would be most adamantly opposed to a national tax.

But there is no reason to believe Johnston was exaggerating when he said Wilson was overstating his case and the provinces still see the GST as a "no-go."

Others have pointed out the provinces will have to shoulder a part of the political heat with Ottawa if a national tax is introduced.