

It's the law

If you're not using your Blue Box now, you'd better start or you may find yourself hauling your garbage bags to bins in the back of your car.

That's the word being sent out by the town's recycling co-ordinator Paul Sergent.

Even though Halton Hills residents are recycling more than many other towns in the province, it's important that everyone who can keep their recyclables out of the garbage dump do just that.

"There's no reason why on garbage day people can't separate their reusables from other garbage," Mr. Sergent says.

When a new bylaw now in the works is passed sometime in late spring, we'll all have to recycle.

It's worth it. There's no use waiting for the provincial government to lay down the law even more than it already has.

Halton Hills, which has fancied itself as a leader in recycling since it first started the Divide and Conquer program in the late '70s, will set down fines for those who don't recycle.

Right now, 90 to 95 per cent of Halton Hills residents who can use the Blue Boxes on their doorstep are using them. That's higher than the provincial average by about five per cent.

When the mandatory recycling idea was first introduced at Halton Region early last year, there were cries of "garbage police."

Call it what you will but town workers who regularly pick up garbage at the doorstep will be keeping their eyes open for Blue Boxes. If they don't appear with the garbage bags several weeks in a row, one bag will be left behind with a sticker attached as a not-so-subtle message to start filling the boxes, if Mr. Sergent's plan is put into effect.

The next message may come in the form of a hand-delivered letter from the town, warning of an impending fine or the threat of losing garbage pick-up altogether.

Mr. Sergent, who is modelling the proposed bylaw after Oakville's policy, says fines may reach up to \$1,000 for those who don't use the Blue Boxes.

That may seem like a stiff fine, but when you put it in context, you can argue in favor of a heavy penalty. There's no way a few people should be able to continue to abuse the environment when most of the residents are doing their part.

Next, it's rural homes and apartments that will be able to take part in the recycling program.

Although the market for recyclables is thin right now, it's probably better to have reusable materials sitting on shelves waiting, than to have them deteriorating needlessly in a garbage dump.

Issue of the '90s



Brian MacLeod
Editor's Notebook

the bylaw to enforce recycling in Halton Hills (you can read what he's up to on Page 1 of today's Herald), will speak at the meeting.

Also, Dawn Moffat, the woman organizing recycling in the town of Caledon will speak at the meeting.

It's open to the public.

Three stores opened their doors once again in Georgetown on Sunday despite being charged previously for opening on Sunday. And one store, Shoppers Drug Mart, faces a charge not of opening on a Sunday but of having too many people working on a Sunday.

Let's see, give someone a job, pay them, take them off the unemployment line, have them contribute to the economy by spending their paychecks... sounds like a crime to me.

Analysts of the not-yet-happened '90s are saying the next 10 years will bring us a greater focus on the environment. And Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner's environment committee will kick off the new decade with a discussion on recycling at the North Halton Golf and Country Club in Georgetown at 7:30 p.m. Monday night.

Paul Sergent, the man drafting

School boards are sharing money

Derek Nelson

Queen's Park
Thomson News Service



When former premier Bill Davis decided to extend separate school funding, all three old-line parties in Ontario (PC, Liberal, NDP) promised that this action wouldn't financially hurt the public schools.

Hah! That promise gives new definition to the word "misleading." In fact, the cost to public schools began almost immediately and continues to rise sharply.

The public school lobby group, the Ontario Public Education Network (OPEN), calculates that the 1985 transfer of residential and farm assessment from the public boards to the RC boards is already costing the public boards \$200 million annually.

Now comes the latest legislative initiative moving wealth from the public boards to the separate boards, a "pooling" of some commercial and industrial assessment that will take \$800,000 in revenue from the public boards.

In essence, these bills, 65 and 66, will take that tax money and put it

in one big pool that both boards will draw on.

It may be that the government originally intended to go further. The bill initially spoke about switching the assessment of Roman Catholics rather than separate school supporters.

Ontario has always given Roman Catholics an option of which board to direct their taxes towards, since the public boards are open to all. It is the universal system. Roman Catholic boards can exclude people. Even with full funding, it is said about 30 per cent of Roman Catholics remain in the public system.

As originally written, Bills 64 and 65 gave Roman Catholics with affected commercial and industrial property no choice in the matter, but simply moved their taxes to the separate boards.

The Liberal government later said this was a "mistake," and 2.5-million pamphlets announcing the change have had to be scrapped.

"Mistake" or not, such a compulsory division of revenue between Roman Catholics and non-Roman Catholics would fit in nicely with the philosophy that underlies the continuing expansion of separate school funding by the province.

This is that there are really two sections to the public school system that should be funded equally - rather than one public system that Roman Catholics can opt out of, or "separate" from, at their own cost.

Forcing Roman Catholics to

financially support the Roman Catholic portion of a dual system, rather than giving them a choice, would clearly fit with that philosophy.

The best way to look at the "dual system" theory is to see it as the taxation of non-Roman Catholics to sustain a Roman Catholic system, something that probably leaves the non-Roman Catholic founders of Ontario public education spinning in their graves.

OPEN estimates that while only 29 per cent of student enrolment is in Roman Catholic schools, \$1.8 billion in provincial grants flows to them. Public boards, which have 71 per cent of enrolment, receive just \$2.2 billion in provincial grants.

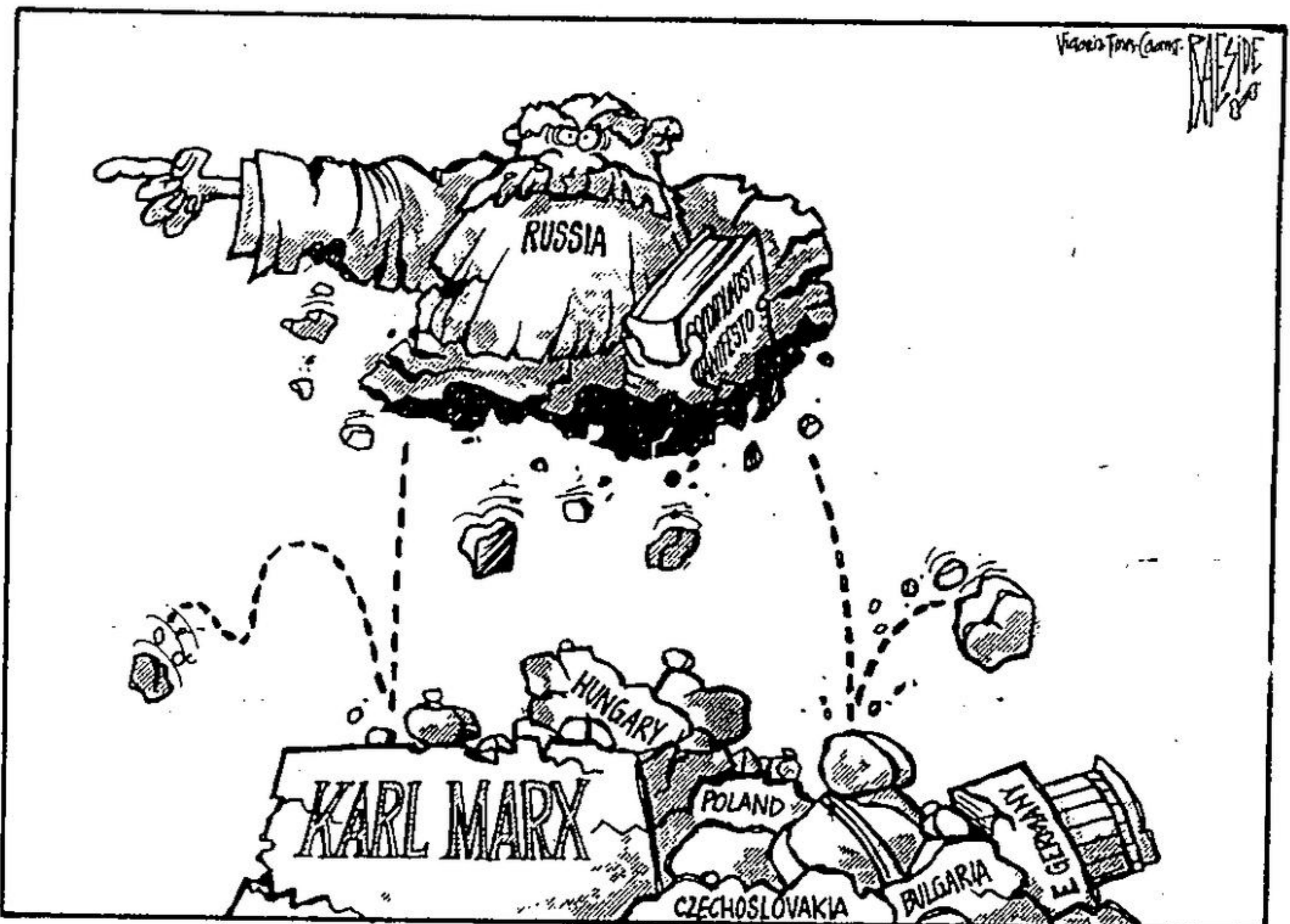
Next year, the value of separate board grants will actually surpass that given public boards, OPEN calculates.

Bill 64 and 65, with their diversion of a portion of the local commercial and industrial property taxes that the public boards require, adds to public board woes.

Moreover, the Roman Catholic boards have made it clear they want access as well to the remaining, unaffected portion of the commercial and industrial revenue.

Concurrently, they are also conducting an aggressive recruiting campaign to entice RCs from the public system (including, in Windsor, offering board employees \$20-a-head bounties for getting people to switch their assessment).

It all bodes ill for public education.



From Dr. Wilson

The 7 per cent solution

Vic Parsons

Ottawa Bureau
Thomson News Service



Hey, come on, folks! Trust Dr. Michael Wilson. The seven-per cent solution is better medicine for you than the nine per cent he initially suggested.

The new prescription for a goods and services tax (GST) may taste almost as bitter as the old one, but the finance minister believes the side-effects will be less painful to the Body Economic.

How do we know? Why, Dr. Wilson used the word "better" at least six times when referring to the revised GST formula at his news conference.

"Better" also cropped up a couple of times, along with "easier," "balanced" and "fairness," in his announcement and associated papers.

But, speaking of fairness, surely it's fair to ask why Wilson tried so long and hard to foist a nine-per cent GST rate on the public if seven per cent was better.

The finance minister stood his ground on the higher rate for months. At the end of October he was saying he thought the nine-per cent rate would hold "barring unforeseen circumstances."

It's difficult to imagine what unexpected events might possibly have inspired the rate reduction since then. After all, economists from across the spectrum were already predicting dire results for the country - especially from tax-induced inflation - if a nine-per cent GST was introduced.

The experts were backed by a chorus of public opposition that, though divided on alternatives, was sure of one thing - the GST as proposed was a rotten idea.

By November, Wilson had begun talking daily about difficult trade-offs. "There is no free ride to a lower rate," he told a Toronto conference on Nov. 3. "There is no easy way to redesign the tax to get the rate down or dramatically alter the short-term economic adjustment."

Difficult trade-offs, yes. But now Wilson was at least leaving open

the possibility of change.

The Commons finance committee report, urging seven per cent along with compensating measures, gave Wilson room to move. Several of the majority report recommendations were adopted, and some new ones were added, to get the rate down.

Among the new ideas announced were the increase in high-income surtaxes, a higher tax on large companies, the elimination of the small-business administration fee and its replacement by a \$1,000 one-time credit, and a halving of the rebate that Ottawa is to pay back from the GST on new homes.

Other measures, such as maintaining the higher taxes on booze, smokes and gasoline, the reversal of a proposal to cut income taxes paid by middle-income earners and reducing the GST credits paid to lower-income people, were widely predicted.

Wilson sees the chief benefit of the rate reduction to be a smaller impact on inflation. The government feared that if the cost of living rose by the 2.25 per cent (higher by other estimates) it had predicted with a nine-per cent tax, demands for increased pay could have set off inflation.