

Waste Not

Our hats are off to Diane van de Valk. She's the woman who is taking an active role in attempting to reduce the amount of waste going into landfill sites by attempting to set up a centre for broken appliances along the lines of the Salvation Army.

Ms. van de Valk appeared before town councillors Monday to plead her case. She wants to set up a project called Waste Not - a non-profit waste reduction centre.

She argues that appliances that are repairable are thrown in the garbage needlessly. Said Ms. van de Valk: "When people learn that kettles don't belong in the garbage they will start to use common sense" and use facilities like the proposed Waste Not centre. She's right.

We're only at the beginning but there's a tremendous amount of education needed to get people away from the idea of throwing everything they think they don't need anymore in that green plastic bag in the corner.

Ms. van de Valk hopes the centre will be self-sustaining in three years. Such a centre would likely need the services of a repair person and someone with a knack for making the appliances appear pleasant. After all, not many people will purchase a dilapidated toaster but someone with the right touch might be able to make these appliances attractive to low-income families.

Ms. van de Valk said the centre would require a \$17,000 start-up contribution from the town. It is taxpayers' money, but it seems to be a worthy project. We're spending \$1 million a month in Halton to dispose of our garbage now.

And as Coun. Marilyn Serjeantson said, "It's nice to see someone offer a solution without asking for \$750,000 for a pilot project."

The town is acting responsibly by being tight with taxpayers' money, but this is one project that's worth a second look.

We'll miss Betty



Brian MacLeod
Editor's Notebook

The friends and colleagues of Betty Fisher who speak so well of the former town councillor and former executive director of the United Way in today's story aren't exaggerating. They speak the truth.

As a reporter I covered town council for two years and I had plenty of opportunity to watch Betty Fisher in action.

Betty's friends and colleagues said she was a tireless worker for the community, that she helped establish the United Way as an important community service in town, that she always spoke her mind, that she wasn't concerned about getting her name in the paper, and that she was someone who liked to make sure the rules were followed.

They're right on all counts.

But what I liked most about Betty was her sense of humor. She appreciated a good joke, or a humorous story and she shared her humor and optimism with the people she knew.

One of my first encounters with Betty came after she stood up at the council table offering an emotional defense of the Halton Board

of Education after some councillors had attacked that body for spending too much money. As the former chairperson of the board, Betty wasn't going to sit idly by. She stood up and offered a zealous explanation of why the board faces different spending problems than other municipal bodies. After that meeting, I approached her simply to ask her if she was indeed once chairperson of the board. "Waaaait a minute," she replied with a smile. "What are you going to write?"

She called me the next day to give me the gritty details of how the board of education operates. She wasn't interested in getting her name in the paper or having her own voice heard above others, she genuinely wanted to talk about the board.

On another occasion, I'll never forget meeting Betty at the bottom of the stairs before a council meeting at the old Trafalgar Road room. Bent over in laughter at a column I had written on another councillor's Liberal leanings, she chuckled: "What's wrong with being a Liberal?"

You just knew she appreciated the humor.

And it's that humor I'll miss most.

A stickler for detail? Oh yes. Her favorite expression at council might have been, "point of order Mr. Chairman." But it's that attention to detail that allows reporters into the budget meetings now. She was one of the councillors who pushed for those meetings to be public.

Betty Fisher demanded and got the respect of her colleagues. She earned it.

Two reporters; two solitudes

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The Glob and Mail recently ran two articles entitled: "A tale of two regions and their treatment of bilingualism."

The newspaper sent one reporter to deepest southwestern Ontario and another to the interior heartland of Quebec.

Their reports are illustrative of a dual standard in Canadian reporting on bilingualism.

Like the bilingualism policy itself, the articles were unfair. They perpetuate the stereotype of the tolerant Quebecer and the intolerant anglophone.

It isn't that any one paragraph written by the Globe reporters in question (anglophone Gene Allen visiting Quebec; francophone Benoit Aubin coming to Ontario) is in itself inaccurate.

Instead, there are unspoken assumptions about what is important and what isn't when it comes to story writing and editing.

Based on these parallel stories, francophone and anglophone reporters don't go looking for the same things

DUALITY

For francophones, it is the linguistic duality of Canada that is important. Hence, Aubin interviewed three francophones about their experiences in southwestern Ontario.

Anglophone reporters, on the other hand, seek stories about "tolerance" and "intolerance," those being the current concerns. Allen therefore preferred to speak to francophones in Quebec to get the real story on minority rights. He recorded no conversations with Quebec anglophones.

The tone that Aubin's interviews give to his piece is best caught by quotes from a Sarnia francophone who, claiming "good friends" who are English-speaking, added "I certainly would not call Ontarians racist, but..." Ahh, yes, the old "some of my best friends" and "but" qualifiers. The francophone feels put upon.

One has no idea what the anglophones in the areas where Allen visited felt. The people whose views he chose to record reinforce the establishment viewpoint that Quebec anglophones have the good life while Ontario francophones are oppressed. The francophones self-proclaimed "continued willingness to accommodate" the local English-speaking minority is emphasized.

These Quebec towns are legally French-only, but Allen is more impressed by the English-language services they volunteer, about their "informal approach" to minority-language "rights," based less on "statutory rights and

bureaucratic procedures than a sense of how personal relations should be conducted."

Aubin, in contrast, has a different agenda. To him, informal services are secondary. Rather, his quotes are littered with references to "respect for your culture and to keep your language," or "they don't go so far as to actually expect you to speak French."

INFORMAL

Revealingly, the mayor of London, Ont., is quoted about the city's ability to respond to queries in 17 languages - informally, as in Allen's examples. But Aubin sees this as secondary.

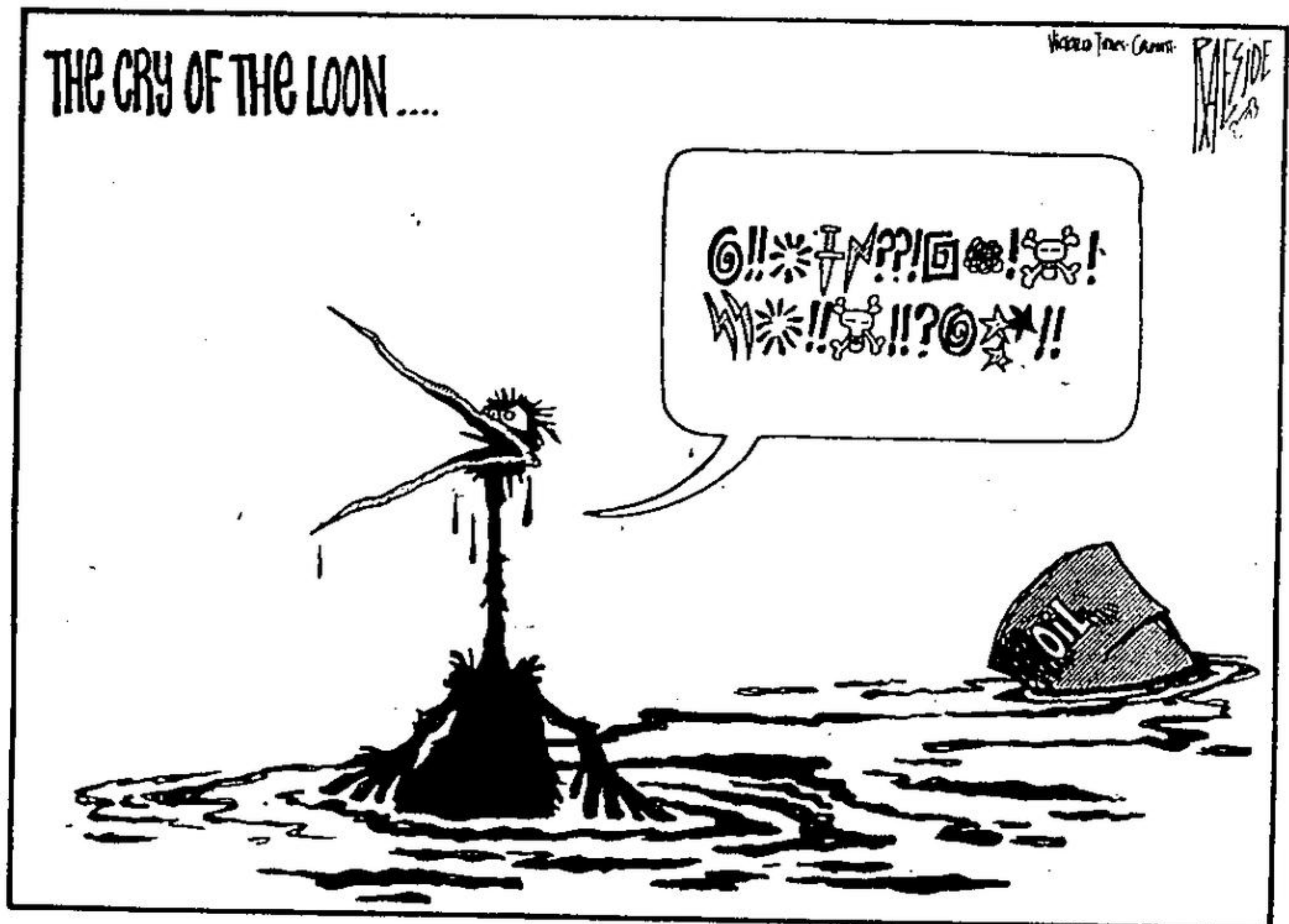
He writes: "Francophones in Ontario refuse to be lumped together with the other immigrant groups in Canada's cultural mosaic..."

In short, the real issue is status rather than service. Ontario municipalities probably offer a greater variety of language services than towns in Quebec. As in Quebec, most of it is done informally. For some reason, this is considered okay for that province's towns but not for Ontario's.

What runs through each of Allen's interviews is the belief that English-only, as in the resolution passed by Sault Ste. Marie, somehow means refusing to deal with someone in French. This is preposterous. English-only means the same in Ontario as French-only does in Quebec. Minority-language service is a courtesy, not a right.

Yet, media treatment of the two provinces is so different. Why?

THE CRY OF THE LOON



US lobby groups want English

Kevin Bell

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Second of a two-part series examining the bilingualism issue in Canada's large neighbor to the south.

By KEVIN BELL
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Language tensions in Canada have become a principal weapon for U.S. lobby groups that are trying to make English the official language of the United States.

The controversy over the Meech Lake constitutional accord and Quebec separatism is frequently mentioned in newsletters issued by U.S. English and English First, two groups that want English as the only language in government.

It is only a matter of time before news of the furor over English-only resolutions passed by Ontario communities such as Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie make it into upcoming editions of these newsletters.

"Did you know Canada's federal government spends \$1.62 million per day on official bilingualism?" asks a recent U.S. English pamphlet.

The organization also reports that 40 per cent of Canadians - and 52 per cent of Quebecers - believe it is likely that Quebec will split from Canada in the next 10 years.

It quotes Elmer Knutson, leader of the Confederation of Regions party, as saying: "Unless we stop the turmoil bilingualism causes, there will be blood in the streets."

A newsletter from English First boasts that the United States has handled French-speaking groups better than Canada has handled Quebecers. It notes that statehood was granted in 1812 to Louisiana, which was then mainly French, with the proviso that all laws be passed in English.

"FARSIGHTED"

"We avoided a Quebec-like problem in this nation because we had farsighted statesmen in office at

the time of Louisiana's statehood," the newsletter says.

Today, English is the main language in Louisiana and few government services are bilingual. Louisiana's 300,000 francophones make up about eight per cent of the state's population.

"We see (bilingualism) as a highly divisive force in Canada and we don't need to import that kind of divisiveness here," Yale Newman, communications director for U.S. English, said in an interview.

"We are saying English in the United States has served as a bridge" between different ethnic groups.

However, cases of discrimination have been reported in some of the 17 states that have adopted laws or constitutional amendments making English the official language.

In Arizona, a college student has filed discrimination charges alleging that a campus policeman warned him to stop speaking Spanish. Another case involved an employer who posted a sign in English and Spanish warning that all job applicants must speak only English.

While both U.S. English and

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