

Editorial

GO train go

Acton residents are crossing their fingers in anticipation of finally getting train service through their community.

We hope they won't be left out in the cold once again.

In the 1984 federal election Otto Jelinek's famous election promise to bring VIA service to Acton turned into a one-train proposal three years later with the town having to pick up a healthy tab to build a train station. He followed that up with a letter to the town saying he had fulfilled his promise.

The town decided not to foot the bill and Acton never got its VIA service.

Mr. Jelinek no longer represents Acton. His riding doesn't include that community any more.

This time, with the recent announcement that the Georgetown GO train line will be expanded to Guelph, there's good reason to believe Acton will get the stop.

Halton North MPP Walt Elliot said "the Acton people are almost assured" of getting a stop.

And after all, a provincial election is very likely on the way.

Halton Regional Chairman Pete Pomeroy said the Region would do its "utmost" to get a stop but, he pointed out, the final decision is left in the hands of the province.

The Liberals do seem in a generous mood right now and if Acton councillors keep at it the GO service could become a reality.

But politicians and residents must keep after those above them.

We don't want to see politicians promise the service again, only to see the trains whizzing by Acton once the election is over.

Back to Earth

Brian MacLeod

Editor's Notebook



Earth Day may have been April 22 but residents of Halton Hills obviously took advantage of the entire Earth Week to learn about their environment.

Many of the events held in schools are chronicled on our Earth Week page on page 11 of today's edition but there are some interesting comments by students of Joseph Gibbons Public School after they were invited to print their thoughts for a time capsule to be buried at Mountsberg Wildlife Centre and Conservation Area in Burlington. The capsule was buried April 22 and it will be re-opened in 2010.

Some of the student's comments:

"Our wish is to have a pollution-free world. We want people to grow more trees and plants and to stop killing the wildlife for things that we don't need.

Here, here!

Another class at Joseph Gibbons said: "People should stop throwing things away and re-use them. We hope the air will not be polluted by factory smoke. We wish there would be no more oil spills."

When young students can sit up and take notice that wreckless oil

spills are ruining our environment and killing wildlife, we know teachers and the media are doing their jobs.

Clearly, the message is getting through in the schools. In Acton, students at the high school watched a play by a young troupe called "Ruckus in the Rainforest." The troupe took students through the perils of the destruction of the rainforest and judging by the questions and the genuine interest shown by the students after the play, they got the message too.

In Stewarttown School the student council organized a litterless lunch and the school was actually able to reduce the amount of garbage they produce in a day from nine bags to two.

The real challenge is can we all do that and can we keep it up?

Finally, over at Georgetown Day Care Centre in Norval, John and Donna Kuenzig are teaching kids between the age of 2½ and five that the environment is important and they should work to preserve it.

John and Donna obviously know the advantages of cathing them while they're young and putting them on the right track.

You may, or may not catch me on this page again next week. For those of you who didn't see it in last week's paper, I married my long-time girlfriend (9½ years) Karen Dunnill two weeks ago with plans to head off to Scotland this Saturday. But, that's right, our flight was booked on the now-defunct Odyssey Airlines.

We're actually one of the fortunate ones. There's thousands of Canadians stuck overseas waiting to get home.

Wait a minute, that's not such a bad prospect!

Doctors have been nationalized

Derek Nelson

Queen's Park
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TORONTO - The doctors of Ontario finally appear to have accepted that they've been nationalized. They've bowed their necks to the guillotine of government control.

The irony is that the government looks set to cut off their heads anyway.

The Ontario Medical Association (OMA) has offered to give up the right to strike in exchange for recognition of it by the government as the doctors' union and binding arbitration to solve disputes over fee negotiations.

This is a major shift for the OMA and its membership. Doctors have long believed they are independent professionals and businessmen who just happen to be getting their incomes from government.

It was fear of losing that status that contributed to the intensity of their resistance to the ban on extra-billing brought in by the Liberal government in 1986.

Doctors went on strike. And lost. There is little public sympathy for the principle of doctor strikes, and even less for strikes aimed at increasing the incomes of the best-paid group of professionals in Ontario - which is exactly how the

government successfully, and misleadingly, portrayed it.

MINISCULE RAISE

Afterwards, many doctors understood that. Certainly the government did. That's how it has been able to impose a miniscule 1.8 per cent OHIP fee increase upon doctors in 1988 and give no increase at all so far for 1989 or 1990.

The OMA, which represents about 85 per cent of Ontario's practicing physicians, has been searching ever since 1986 for a new strategy to use in dealing with the government.

OMA President Carole Guzman explained it this way in a recent speech:

"We had to be realistic. The health-care system was changing. The Ontario Medical Association had to change, too, and had to adopt a new perspective.

"We had to approach a new relationship not from the perspective of the independent professionals we once were, but from the perspective of professionals working in a health-care system that is publicly financed and managed by government.

"Having accepted that perspective, we began to try and find a way to make co-operation work. It was obvious to us that the biggest obstacle in our relations with government was fee negotiations. It was clear that if we were to address the broader issues of health care, we needed to end fee disputes," she said.

And that's when the OMA came up with the no-strike pledge in exchange for binding arbitration of fee disputes and recognition by the government as the doctors' bargaining agent. In short - a doctor's union. (Doctors who do not

want to belong to the OMA would not have to, but would be subject to the Rand formula and have to pay the fees, since they would benefit from the negotiations.)

With the uncertainty and nastiness of fee disputes out of the way, the doctors could concentrate on what the government wants them to do, which is come up with some ways to bring health-care system costs under control. After all, physicians and other practitioners directly control about one-third the costs of medical care, and both government and doctors claim to be interested in good - but efficiently delivered - care for all.

STALLED

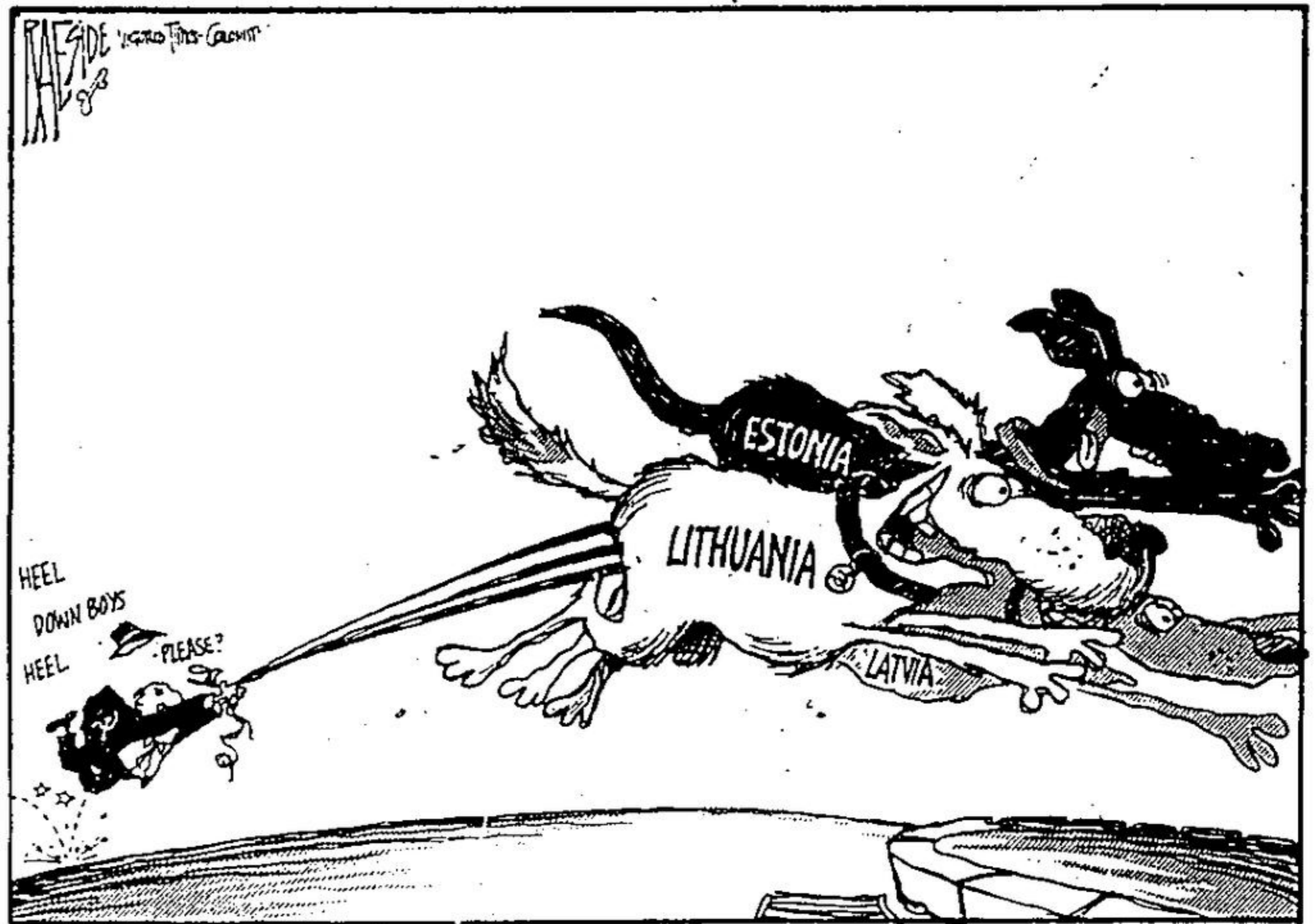
Yet, negotiations are now stalled.

The doctors want the same kind of binding arbitration that other government professionals such as Crown attorneys and hospital-based psychiatrists have. The government, although it refuses to publicly reveal its views, apparently wants to set up a special appeal procedure strictly for doctors.

The OMA fears a trap. It may be right. The problem the organization faces is that it lacks believable clout in government eyes. By offering to give up the right to strike, it is simply describing reality anyway. The Liberals know the OMA can't use "withdrawal of services" again, so why should they give the OMA anything?

The correct answer is why not? The "psychic shift," as Guzman called it, towards acceptance as state employees is a major leap for doctors.

They've offered their heads. For the Grits to slice them off would be adding injury to insult.



Trade imbalance increases debts

Vic Parsons

Ottawa Bureau
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OTTAWA - It's no secret a strong dollar and high interest rates have savaged Canada's trade performance in recent months.

What is less evident is a side-effect: A deteriorating trade balance tends to increase our debts to foreigners.

And when politicians, including Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, talk about our \$350-billion national debt placing an unfair burden on future generations, this foreign portion is what they should be most worried about.

Here's why: it has to do with our balance of payments with other countries.

This balance sums up all the

transactions between Canada and the rest of the world in a year. It has two main parts.

One is the current account. This includes merchandise trade, often called in goods, and a variety of other payments. These other exchanges include travel by Canadians abroad and foreigners here; shipping costs; business services; investment income, such as interest and dividend payments; and transfers, such as money sent out of Canada to relatives abroad, foreign aid contributions and the like.

Generally, Canada benefits from a surplus in merchandise trade, but runs up a larger deficit in the non-merchandise categories.

That brings us to the second element. To offset this current account deficit, we must import money. These transactions are included in the capital account and take the form of foreign purchases of Canadian companies, stocks and bonds. Our investments in other countries balance these off, to a degree.

RECORD DEFICIT

In 1989, Canada rolled up a record deficit in its current account of \$19.7 billion, nearly double

the previous high. And last year, about \$22.5 billion of foreign capital flowed into Canada. This, too, was a record. Ominously, the previous capital account high was \$14.6 billion in 1981, just as the last recession was building up steam.

Why did the current account shortfall soar last year? The main factor was a deep plunge in our surplus in trade goods. While merchandise exports by \$1.6 billion last year over 1988, we imported \$6.8 billion more. So, the merchandise trade surplus suffered a net \$5.2 billion reduction.

This year doesn't promise to be any better. In the first two months of 1990, our sales abroad have fallen by 2.9 per cent from a year earlier. Meanwhile, our imports have risen by 1.5 per cent.

What's going on? Part of the answer may lie in businesses importing foreign-made equipment to gear up for opportunities arising from free trade.

But exporters blame high interest rates and the "over-valued" Canadian dollar. Three-quarters of Canadian exporters are having difficulty as a result of the dollar's value, and 58 per cent say the pro-

Continued on Page 7