

It's a tug of war

Halton students are caught in a tug of war between politics and the reality of changing demographics of the Region.

The Halton Board of Education wants to implement an opening exercise format in its schools to include aspects of the different religions represented in the schools.

The board has prepared a resource document containing more than a thousand secular and religious quotes. The intent is for schools to use quotes from the document each morning in the opening exercises to reflect the religious composition of the schools.

That means students will be listening to everything from Aristotle, to Lester B. Pearson to the Bible and rock musician Bryan Adams.

The board took the step after being told last year that opening exercises should reflect the different religions in Halton's schools.

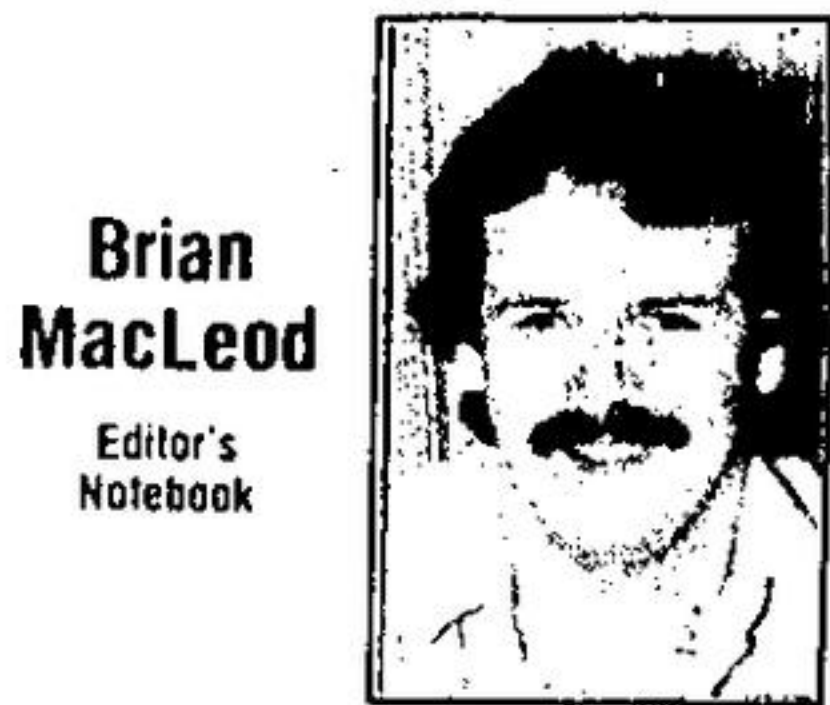
The board's intentions may be good, but we suspect the results will confuse its students. Does a school include a saying from the Koran because it has one or two Muslim students? If so, how often?

The solution is to keep religion out of the opening exercises. If students' religious beliefs are important to them, they can worship privately in a few moments by themselves. It need not be forced on them - no matter what their religion.

There is a very positive move by the board. The committee that prepared the resource document recommended the opening exercises celebrate the benefits of being Canadian.

We could all stand to be reminded of those virtues from time to time.

So long!



Brian MacLeod
Editor's Notebook

The next time I pound away on a keyboard, it won't be making the familiar rattle of my trusty typewriter. Nor will the drive to work, and undoubtedly the weather, have a ring of familiarity to it.

These words are the last I'll write (or is that type?) in Georgetown. On Monday, I take up my new position as city editor of the Kirkland Lake Northern Daily News, a six-day-a-week publication.

It's bound to be different. After all, I've only ever been as far north as North Bay. And that will soon be 2½ hours south.

Nevertheless, I can't leave Georgetown without making a few observations. As small towns go, Halton Hills is one of the most vibrant, and interesting towns a community reporter can hope to cover.

A mix of long-time country residents, and younger sophisticated readers accustomed to the bright pictures and big headlines of the Toronto daily newspapers, Halton Hills is the perfect mix for variety in a reporter's life.

Georgetown, like any other town, has events that reflect "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" (if I may borrow the title).

But without a doubt, the former outshines the latter two categories.

A staggering amount of volunteers and tireless workers help Halton Hills be a better place to live. It seems hardly a week ever went by in which we weren't called out to some organization or event honoring volunteers, or recognizing their efforts.

There's one volunteer group, which, perhaps due to my exposure to them, I'd like to single out as worthy of distinct recognition. The Halton Hills Volunteer Ambulance group must be responsible for saving many lives. The ring of the siren constantly flies past the Herald's door - for fires, for accidents, for medical emergencies, for anything.

But there's others. Lions, Optimists, Rotarians, Kinsmen, Kiwanis and Elks are constantly raising money for worthy causes throughout the town. In a town of just 35,000, the amount of service groups and volunteers is overwhelming.

And these are interesting times. Halton Hills, especially Georgetown, is facing growth that rivals the Delrex subdivision. Groups are springing up to stop certain aspects of that growth. The Mountainview Area Ratepayers Association fought Georgetown South, a new group is fighting the condominium development on Maple Avenue, and on a different note, you can't overlook the efforts of POWER, whose organizational achievements and staying power (pardon the pun) should make a good role model for other ratepayers' groups.

I'll be going to Kirkland Lake. But I won't be leaving Halton Hills behind. I'll make sure I get copies of the Herald regularly. I may even write a letter or two, or three ...

What does pay equity mean?

Derek Nelson

Queen's Park
Thomson News Service



TORONTO - Most Ontarians are well aware of the various discriminatory hiring and promotion practices indulged in by government under the name employment equity.

But it is doubtful they grasp just how extensive these racial and other employment preferences have become.

The Ontario government has just concluded two years of its Voluntary Exit Opportunities (VEO) program, which allows for early retirement or simply quitting the provincial civil service in exchange for extremely generous financial benefits.

The unspoken assumption behind the program was to get rid of as many white male employees as possible and replace them with designated others.

The aim here is - to quote from the employment equity bible, Strategies For Renewal, put out by the Human Resources Secretariat - "by the year 2000, the representation of all designated groups will be at least proportional to their representation within the Ontario population."

DESIGNATED GROUPS

The five designated groups are aboriginals, women, racial

minorities, francophones and people with disabilities - that is, everybody except able-bodied, English-speaking white males.

There are two key elements to note here.

The first is that "representation" is to be decided by the size of the group within the population rather than by its presence in the workforce.

For example, even though half the native Indian population is under 18, it is to be allotted jobs on the basis of overall numbers.

The second is that the goal of equal representation is a minimum ("at least") and is not a fixed quota. Any number exceeding the minimum is apparently acceptable (except for white, English-speaking males, of course).

The government position is explicit: "The goals should be regarded as minimum levels of representation to be achieved and should not be taken to indicate a need to reduce representation."

For instance, among the 545 people in 28 ministries who are in systems services (management), 23.7 per cent are racial minorities.

The current figure used for their numbers in Ontario is 8.6 per cent (1986 Ontario census), while the projected year 2000 figure is 12 per cent of the population.

Does the over-representation in this particular mid-management group bother anyone?

No. In fact, the goal for the section is to "identify those (racial minority) individuals with potential for senior management and (executive) positions and provide appropriate training and developmental opportunities."

It goes further. Racial minorities (8.6 per cent of Ontarians) already comprise 11.8 per cent of the lower

level (bargaining unit) government jobs, 11 per cent of management, 11.5 per cent of senior management and 3.7 per cent of executives.

NUMERICAL GOALS

The government comments: "Even though overall representation of racial minorities may look sufficient at management and bargaining unit levels, severe under-representation is found within many occupation groups (such as engineering and surveying) and numerical goals were established for these occupational groups."

It is difficult to see how any able-bodied, anglophone white male is going to get an even chance at anything with those kinds of rules.

This, incidentally, is why a system of quotas for jobs is much fairer than the current "goals and timetables." With a quota system, a certain number of jobs would be reserved for able-bodied anglophone white males and they could compete among themselves for those openings. Under the current system, they are at the back of the line.

There is a psychological price to be paid for this by everyone involved, not the least of which is the death of the Canadian dream of equal opportunity. As one white anglophone male wrote to me, after he filled in a government employment application that contained a note saying preference was being given to designated groups: "I didn't want to be in second place ... not before I had even applied for a job and had someone read my qualifications."

It is amazing how things have gone full circle to officially sanctioned discrimination in just one generation.

HOW TO GUARANTEE YOUR TV. NEWS RATINGS WILL GO UP....



COMING UP IN THE NEWS TONIGHT, THERE WILL BE NO MENTION OF...
... MEECH LAKE...
... THE PREMIERS...
... U.S. BASKETBALL...
... THE RESULTS OF ANY LATEST POLL...

Post Office is much maligned

Vic Parsons

Ottawa Bureau
Thomson News Service



OTTAWA - What's your vision of Canada Post?

Is it a dynamic, modern phoenix rising from the ashes of despair, struggling to improve service while making enough money to pay its own way?

Or is it a blood-sucking vampire, riding roughshod over employees, slashing back on obligations, especially to rural Canadians, in a grotesque obsession with rearing itself for sale to private-business suitors?

Naturally, the truth lies between these extremes. The federal government's most-maligned institution is neither monster nor paragon.

We all have stories about Canada Post's deficiencies. Frequent strikes; lost or long-delayed mail; granny's cremated ashes gone astray; cynical changes in definition of "on-time" delivery; needless harassment of staff; the closure of rural offices; the list goes painfully on.

Old habits die hard. But, after more than two decades of essentially negative news about Canada Post, it must be said there's some good news, too.

Among the happy tidings is Canada Post's report this week of a second straight year of profit, a \$149-million return, of which \$60 million will be paid into general revenues of the federal government. That's the first dividend payment of a total \$300 million that Ottawa expects over the next five years.

BETTER PROFIT

Moreover, for the second consecutive year the corporation significantly exceeded its own profit expectations.

In the fiscal year just completed, Canada Post anticipated a profit of \$122 million. But the expected economic slowdown in the first three months of 1990 was less severe than expected and mail volumes grew substantially. This brought more money into corporate coffers.

In the year that began last April 1, Canada Post's profit is expected to slide to about \$48 million. An unknown is the impact on postal revenues of the goods and services tax, which comes into effect next January.

The corporation will also have a larger labor bill to pay this year. The crunch in negotiations with its biggest union, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, may come in late summer or fall.

But don't be surprised if this year, too, the corporation markedly exceeds its profit forecasts.