

Letters

Education board busing policy questioned

To the Editor:

On Thursday evening, Oct. 25, the Halton Board of Education had an opportunity to vote to review their existing transportation policy. This policy was last reviewed in 1985 and prior to that, in 1979. It was deeply disappointing to see the Board vote irresponsibly to defer this sorely needed review yet another year - a case of voting first and asking questions later.

The present transportation policy raises questions around

the safety of very young children, and the very real inconveniences put upon high-school age children. The Halton Board's transportation policy expects children in kindergarten to grade 2 to walk up to 1.6 km to school; children in grades 3-8 to walk up to 3.2 km to school; and high school students to walk up to 4.8 km to school. It is only when they live beyond these distances that they can expect to be bussed.

A meeting of over 180 Glen Ab-

bey parents held last June brought out the fact quite clearly that all of these parents felt that these distances were unacceptable for Halton's younger children. The Glen Abbey Residents' Association of over 1760 members supported the concerns of these parents and along with them urged the Board to vote for a review of its transportation policy. No matter how safe a route might appear to be, to expect a 4 or 5 year old in

kindergarten to walk 1.6 km (1 mile) or a 7 or 8 year old in grade 3 to walk 3.2 km (2 miles) is seen as inappropriate and as exposing children to situations where poor decisions on their part could put their safety in jeopardy.

A parents group from Bronte who attended last Thursday's Board meeting were also concerned about the distances their high-school age children had to travel on foot to get to school and the length of time it took them. There is a lack of public transit to the high school and as a result their children were having to walk almost 4.8 km (3 miles) to school every day.

In spite of support from some of our local Oakville trustees to review the policy, the majority of the Board took the stance that a review would lead to an unwanted and politically-feared increase in Board expenditures. However, reviews cost nothing except time and effort. It is the decisions that the Board makes based on the information and perceived needs that arise from such a review that may or may not lead to expenditures. What price a child's safety?

By purposely voting not to be informed the Board thinks it can hide its head in the sand while pretending to be responsible to the taxpayers. The Board is acting irresponsibly with what appears to be political motivation. It will be a dark day in Halton if this Board decides to save money at the expense of some grade three child's safety. A look at the Halton Separate School Board and the Peel Board of Education's transportation policies show they have addressed these concerns and put children's safety first. For example, in Peel no child below grade nine has to walk more than 1.6 km (1 mile) to school.

We again implore our elected trustees to gather the information first through a policy review and then make their decisions.

Sincerely
Drue Marriott

Chair
Parents Concerned
About Busing

Brian W. Bell
Director
Glen Abbey Residents'
Association

'Canadian dictatorship' reader suggests

Dear Sir:

As you are aware by now our Prime Minister has stacked the Senate against the will of the people, he now has 54 Senators to the peoples 51, but there are also 6 independent Senators. They are, Senator Hartland Molson, Senator Daniel Lang, Senator P.M. Pitfield, Senator Douglas Everett, Senator Stan Waters and Senator Edward Lawson, in their hands lie the fate of fair taxation and democracy as we know it today.

These are indeed troubled times for Canada when the Prime Minister refuses to listen to 80% of the people, he has told us in no uncertain terms that he has the mandate to do whatever he wants, he will ram through the G.S.T. and the people will serve him and his conservative party.

We have to show this poor excuse for a Prime Minister that this is not Nazi Germany or Communist Russia.

When we elect a Prime Minister, we give that person one right and one right only and that is the right to serve the people of this nation, whatever other rights Brian Mulroney thinks he has, at best they are insignificant when compared with the democratic rights of the people, you see the rights of the people are written in blood.

Over 100,000 young Canadians have fought and died for the rights that you and I now have, for us to let Brian Mulroney destroy what so many have given their lives to protect without a fight, would be the greatest insult we could bestow upon our

veterans and our war dead, we must never forget these words ... if you break faith with us who die we shall not sleep ...

The six independent Senators can stop the G.S.T., but you have to write to them and let them know of your concern, you are a Canadian, and you will make a difference, please write to them now, their address is The Senate of Canada, Ottawa, Ont., K1A 0A4 (no postage required).

If you do not like writing then send them this letter, get all your family and friends and everyone who is against this tax to write, if we ignore these six Senators we will deserve the G.S.T. and the dictatorship of Brian Mulroney.

Sincerely,
John Welham,
R.R. 10, Peterborough, Ont.

Write us a letter!

The Herald wants to hear from you. If you have an opinion you want to express or a comment to make, send us a letter or drop by the office. Our address is 45 Guelph St., Georgetown, Ont., L7G 3Z6.

All letters must be signed. Please include your address and telephone number for verification.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters due to space limitations or libel.

Columnists

Oil price rises are historically bad news

OTTAWA - Your nerves are probably a-jangle enough, what with all the talk of recession, higher taxes and rising unemployment, but there's something you should know about rapidly climbing oil prices.

History suggests they're bad news.

That's probably no terrific surprise. But, lest you had any doubts, a check of the economic numbers after the energy-price shocks of 1973-74 and 1979-80 suggests Canadians are in for a rough ride in the next couple of years.

Recession was anticipated even before Iraq barged into Kuwait, setting off the crisis that has seen oil prices double in the last couple of months. Now, the additional turmoil threatens to push the economy deeper into the hole.

Canada was expected to have the slowest growth rate in the next year of the seven major industrial powers. Now, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the world lending agency, has lowered its

estimate of our economic growth due to the Persian Gulf imbroglio.

And don't think you can expect much government help to cope with the impact of surging energy prices.

In the two previous shocks, Ottawa took steps to soften the blow. This time the IMF has decided to let the chips fall where they may. The agency will oppose any moves to cushion consumers against higher oil prices through subsidies or controls.

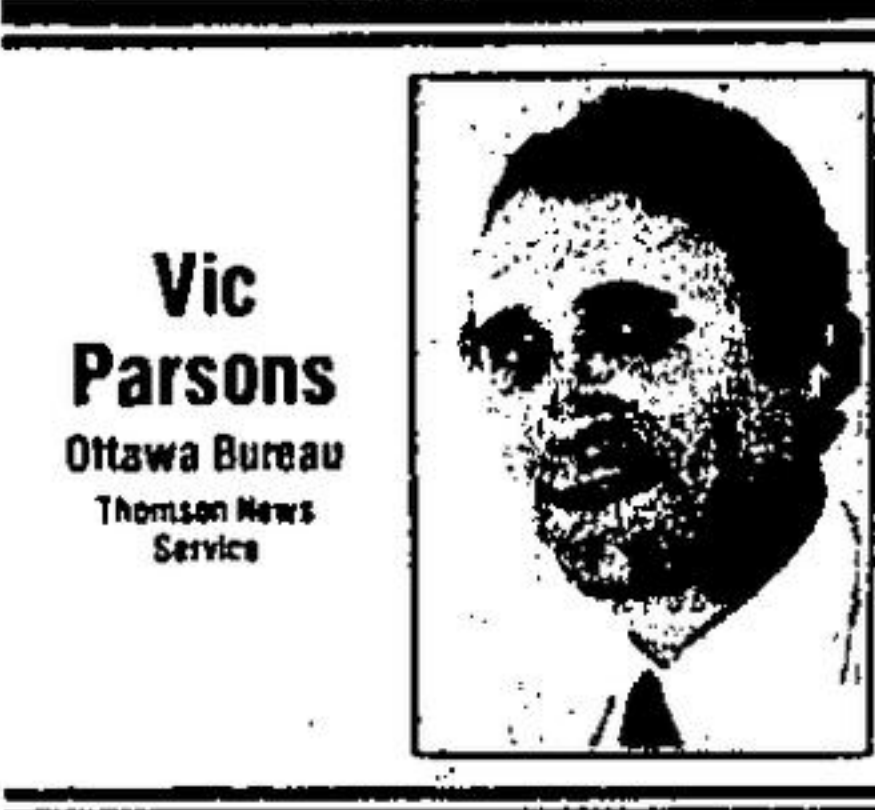
MEANINGFUL MOVE

The decision is particularly meaningful because Finance Minister Michael Wilson happens to be chairman of the IMF board that issued the declaration.

Let's look back a bit, first to 1973-74.

In 1973, Canada experienced its fastest economic growth in two decades. Unemployment was well below six per cent and inflation at the start of the year was about five per cent.

A record number of 430,000 jobs



Vic
Parsons
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were created. Business capital investment was up 15 per cent, consumer spending was strong, housing starts were exceptional, and Ottawa was running - wait for it - a surplus.

War in the Middle East erupted in the summer. Arab producers cut production sharply and raised prices, joined by other members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), notably Venezuela.

As oil prices soared, economic

expansion in 1974 was halved. Jobs were still being created at a healthy pace, but productivity growth slowed sharply, labor costs per unit of production were up 14 per cent, inflation soared to a post-Korean War peak and interest rates rose by about 40 per cent.

By the end of 1974, the economy was entering recession, with an aggravating combination of inflation and sluggish growth known as "stagflation." Economic output bottomed out early in 1975 before recovering.

DISCOMFORT HIGHER

Interestingly, 1975 was a peak for the so-called "discomfort index," as measure developed by opposition critics by adding inflation, as measured by the consumer price index, to the jobless rate.

There was more of the same, only worse, after the second oil-price shock in 1979-80, which grew from the United States-Iran standoff. Oil prices tripled and overall energy costs peaked in 1981. Inflation was already high at 10 per cent in 1980 but continued skyward to 12.5 per

cent the next year. Interest rates averaged close to 18 per cent in 1981.

As the oil-price hikes hit, economic growth tumbled. It fell to two per cent in 1980 from five per cent the previous year, and rumbled downward to the severe recession of 1982 when the economy shrank by nearly six per cent.

The jobless rate, which appears to peak about two or three years after a shock, came in at 11.8 per cent in 1983. But employers had already stopped hiring the year before. Statistics Canada's help-wanted index fell by 45 per cent in 1982. That was also the year the discomfort index soared to new heights.

Housing starts in 1982 were at the lowest level in two decades, productivity tumbled 5.3 per cent (the only year of actual decline since 1947) and business capital investment fell in both 1982 and 1983, the first declines since the late 1960s.

If the Gulf crisis is not soon resolved and history repeats, there could be stormy seas ahead.

Israeli officials complain about double standards

By DEREK NELSON
World Affairs Analyst
Thomson News Service

Israeli officials are entitled to complain about Western hypocrisy and double standards when it comes to judging the Jewish state against its Arab rivals.

Somehow Israel is expected to meet a utopian standard of morality that no one dares to apply against Arabs.

Note how quickly "the world", as represented by the United Nations, was able to put together a resolution condemning Israeli police killing 19 Arab rioters at Temple Mount.

On the other hand, weeks after the sack of Kuwait began, with rapine and rape everywhere, with definitely hundreds - maybe thousands - killed, "the world", as represented by the United Nations, is still trying to craft a resolution acceptable to everyone that would condemn Iraqi behavior towards Kuwaiti civilians. Note the UN trade embargo was in response to the Iraqi

invasion, not the atrocities committed by Iraqis.

Is it any wonder Israeli reaction has been angry defiance?

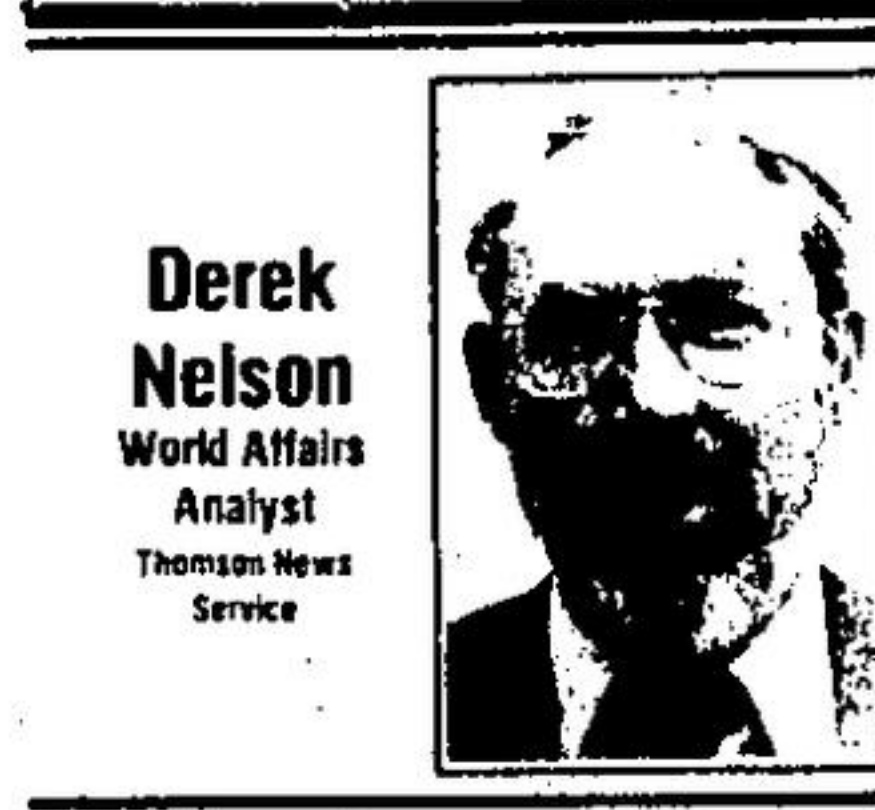
Why "the world" can respond immediately to Israeli infractions of supposed international morality but so slowly to others is a hotly debated question.

One theory suggests it is simply a new-fashioned anti-Semitism that somehow acquires validity because the target is Zionism or Israel instead of Jews - even though the words are obviously interchangeable in the minds of many of the critics.

PARALLEL LENSES

Another explanation examines those peculiar creatures who appear to see life through two parallel lenses. One eye is tolerant and open-minded of human frailty, willing to accept and sometimes overlook even the most base actions - as long as it is done by people not considered friends of the Western world.

The second lens is harsh, judgmental, and shines with the brilliance of moral purity. It is



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reserved for the West and friends of the West like Israel.

Another proposition came from a former Israeli information officer named Zeev Chafets in a book written a few years ago, entitled Double Vision.

In his view, it was a simple matter of access. Israel was an open society where both domestic and foreign criticism had free rein. Arab societies were and are closed worlds.

This isn't just a matter of lack

of democracy or a free press in the Arab world, although that doesn't help. It is that the Arabs don't play by the same rules.

Not only are resident Western correspondents not allowed to set up shop or enter most Arab countries except under escort, it is also that reporting can be dangerous. Stories deemed hostile by one or other Arab faction can result in reporters' death or disappearance - maybe a dozen in Lebanon alone.

Reporters are safe in Israel from hit men, even when they savagely attack the government.

Probably no better example of the results that can arise from the clash of reporting in open and closed systems occurred in 1982.

IGNORED

In secretive Syria, the government (yes, the same government as today) smashed the city of Homs and killed between 5,000 and 15,000 people in putting down a Muslim Brotherhood rebellion. The media, who couldn't get close to it, essentially ignored the story.

Not many miles away and about eight months later, Israel was involved in its war against the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon. Christian militia allied to Israel entered the Shatilla-Sabra "refugee camps" (actually, towns) and killed 460 people, more than 90 per cent of them combat age men. This became a famous "massacre" and Israel, even though it hadn't pulled the trigger, took enormous blame. The story went on for weeks and eventually Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon had to successfully sue Time magazine for libel to end the campaign against him.

Today, the outrage is over shooting at an Arab holy site.

How many remember the two-week battle in 1979 by Saudi Arabian troops to put down rebels who had seized the Great Mosque in Mecca? Later, 69 rebels were publicly beheaded.

Naturally, reporters weren't invited to either the siege or the mosque or the beheadings.