

## Has the system let down local environmental groups ?

By BEN DUMMETT

The Herald

Should local environmental groups such as Protect Our Environmental Water Resources, (POWER) and Furiously Opposed to Acton Dumping, (FOAD) put their faith in the existing system to fight the Acton dump proposal?

According to famed American environmentalist Lois Gibbs the answer is no.

In her recent address to POWER members, Ms. Gibbs said the system will inevitably fail the public because it's the creation of the powers that be - the government. An institution, Ms. Gibbs says, that doesn't have the public interest in mind.

Ms. Gibbs points out it was only after she and other residents of the chemical dumping ground Love

Canal in Niagara Falls embarrassed the New York State government to take steps to protect the area residents.

Scientific data and legal arguments supporting the residents failed to generate government action, she said.

Ms. Gibbs' line of argument implies governments, including the Ontario provincial government, naturally operate at odds with the interest of the general public.

In the case of the Acton dump proposal that means when the proposal goes before the government supported Environmental Assessment Hearing, approval is inevitable.

Ultimately, evidence submitted during the hearing by POWER, FOAD members and others in opposition to the project will be rejected.



Ben's Banter  
by Ben Dummett

The first question that comes to mind is who comprises the general public. Presumably it's both those who oppose the project and those who support it.

Assuming this answer is correct,

it only seems right that the government - as a representative of all the people - afford both sides an opportunity to present their cases.

It's this argument the government is using to reject requests by POWER and FOAD members that the project be permanently shelved instead of being allowed to go before a hearing.

However local ratepayer groups, whenever they get the chance, quickly point out it was the current Ontario Minister of Environment, Ruth Grier, who, before being elected, said publicly she opposes the establishment of dumps anywhere on the escarpment.

And where is the Acton dump being proposed for? Why the United Aggregates quarry located on the Niagara Escarpment of course.

It's not surprising then that

POWER and FOAD members don't have faith in a process supported by the current government.

Instead of supporting the process why didn't the New Democratic Party, once in power, immediately take steps to change the system in a way that the process would reject the Acton dump proposal outright.

To be fair to the provincial government, maybe it tried to do so, but found it to be impossible.

I'm not sure if local groups should or shouldn't rely on the system to fight the Acton dump proposal. But I am certain they'll find it necessary to challenge it in a way they feel is appropriate, if the province doesn't support those statements regarding the escarpment it made prior to gaining power.

## Canada shouldn't look south for economic help

A few years ago I used to teach in California. At that time that state was a beehive of ideas, possibly the world centre of social and cultural innovation. Sure, we had some problems: racial tension, some nasty pockets of poverty, but by-and-large California was the leading edge of the world.

A couple of weeks ago I had occasion to go back there for business. It was shocking. Los Angeles, that proud, uninhibited city, has the look of the Third World Country. Wealthy neighbourhoods, next to slums which have nothing to envy to those of Mexico City or Teheran. Rolls Royce dealers, and a few yards away garages which remind me of those of Central America. The once glorious Santa Monica beach a row of junk shops, with boarded-up buildings.

Motorways, bridges which seem to have been neglected for years.

But, most important: a general sense of direction and despair. The universities I visited looked frozen in time: as I would have left the day before. Well, actually

the kids are now very respectful, not necessarily a good sign in an academic environment. I went from there to other cities and a couple of other South-Western states. While nowhere else I had the same sense of being in the Third World, I found the same lethargy and lack of purpose. While it is certainly possible to do business there, and I did, it is also evident that if we in Canada expect the American economy to get us out of our own slump, we better think again.

The eighties have damaged the American psyche, social fabric and economy to a point where the recovery process will have to be enormous. Baloney. Well, how do you integrate five million slum dwellers, with irrelevant skills, in a modern economy. And this in one city alone.

Compared to the situation I saw, our economic problems are positively a golden state of well-being. We have, at most, one million of "un-employable" people. Roughly 4 percent of our population. The USA has 30 million of them, something like 11



Another View  
by Carlo Testa

percent! Sure, some products and services are much cheaper there than in Canada, but at what immense social cost!

Anyhow, no reason to rejoice here, just the need to understand that, if we want to get out of our economic slump, we better realize that we are not going to get pulled out of it by our big neighbour.

While I was there, the hurricane over the "excessive" interests charged by credit cards to their customers was blowing at full force. Back in Canada I found that the some of our political mentors have mounted the same white charger.

It makes sense: banks and other credit institutions have never enjoyed a great amount of sympathy, and there is plenty of political hay to be made from accusing them of gouging the public.

Some of the arguments used however, are bizarre. It is a fact that possession of a credit card has practically become a necessity in our world. It is almost impossible, except by going around with wads of banknotes, to book into a hotel or rent a car without giving the friendly clerk an imprint of our card.

On the other hand the use of a credit card as a means of obtaining access to instant, long-term credit is an act of free choice.

Sure, I know that some people in these difficult times do not have much choice, but the fact remains that using a credit card not as a convenient way of payment but as an instrument of credit is foolish. What banks have clearly done is that they have, rather sneakily, created two types of credit. The standard bank loan, which requires some solid

guarantees, and is made available at a "reasonable" cost, and the "loan" through a credit card, which is obtainable practically on demand but is extremely expensive.

The banks are taking advantage of their customers not by overcharging interests, but by creating the false impression that a credit card is "free" money. The banks play the role of the snake-oil peddler and those who use their product are...suckers. Which begs the question of what is the role of the banks' political critics in the scenario.

Why raise the rather anecdotal credit card soap-opera together with the tragic plight of the USA. Because both have a common denominator. The ease with which we tend to avoid our responsibilities and to look elsewhere for solutions. The solution to our problems will not come from the States and will not come from lower interest rates on credit card's unpaid balances. It will come from better management of our national and personal finances, that is from us.

## Columnist is once again rescued by Dear Abby

Whew! Once again, Dear Abby has come to my rescue.

Just when I was beginning to feel hopelessly out of touch with yet another Important Modern Reality, Abby has declared that hugging is dumb.

Ge. It's enough to make a guy want to reach out to Abby and give her a great big...um, a great big smile of gratitude.

Actually, I should probably clarify this, a little. Dear Abby hasn't exactly called hugging dumb.

But the other day, she printed a letter from a woman who feels highly uncomfortable about hugging anyone except members of her immediate family, and Abby assured her that she's far from alone in these feelings, and that she need not feel the slightest bit guilty.

When Abby speaks, the world should wake up and smell the coffee.

As you may have guessed, I am a Reluctant Hugger. And this poses quite a problem, in a society which conditions us to believe that healthy and caring people should go around embracing everyone they meet.

Granted, I understand the rationale behind the Hug Movement. The theory is that we can all benefit by warm and meaningful human contact. And I have nothing against this notion, per se.

I just think we sometimes underestimate the amount of warm and meaningful human contact that can be achieved via fax.

For quite awhile, I confess, I

was beginning to worry that my hesitancy about hugging might reflect some deep-rooted inability to open up and trust. And indeed it's possible my views on hugging were warped by certain childhood experiences.

When you grow up in a family of four boys, you quickly learn that a hug is not a spontaneous gesture of brotherly love. Rather, it's the opening hold in a wrestling match - and will lead, if not ruthlessly countered, to the figure-four leg-lock, or perhaps the piledriver.

We were never a hugging family. My father is a warm and generous man, but he has always believed that hugging has its proper time and place - like, say, on a football field, after a touchdown has been scored.

Instead, we did a lot of hand-shaking. Naturally, this shaped our views on displaying emotions - not to mention our physique.

The Weirs have never been noted for upper-body strength, or for profound cardio-vascular fitness. But we've all got fingers that could crack walnuts.

Anyway, I've tried my best to adapt to the current mania for hugging. I've reached the point where I can feel almost comfortable hugging women friends.

The trouble is, the modern guy is also expected to hug the modern guy.

Perhaps it's my own miserable insecurity. But when a male approaches in hugging mode, I feel a desperate urge to turn to anyone standing nearby and blurt: "I'm not going to enjoy this. Honest."

Weir's World  
by Ian Weir  
Thomson News Service



I dunno. Perhaps my aversion boils down to the implied statement that guys should hug other guys in order to show they are sensitive and nurturing.

Now, there's nothing really wrong with this. Except there are times when I just don't WANT to seem sensitive and nurturing. I'd rather seem remote and vaguely dangerous, a man with different biceps but truly powerful digits.

Besides, I can't help harboring dark suspicions about where male hugging can lead. You know what I mean.

If guys aren't awfully careful,

it can lead to drum-beating and Wildman Retreats, on which they share their deepest feelings about what it means to be male, and arrive at the triumphant and liberating conclusion that women are entirely to blame for the fact that men are such weenies.

Ah, well. Perhaps I'm over-reacting. And as I say, I have nothing against warm and meaningful human contact. Really, I honestly think you and I should do this sort of thing much more often.

So perhaps we should exchange fax-numbers.

### People's Forum

## Citizen wants to help seniors

Dear Editor:

I have just read your latest edition in which Mr. and Mrs. Pickup said that regular help for seniors was unavailable.

I sympathize with them.

Five years ago, after spending 20 years with a firm, I lost my job due to a company merger. I had to do some kind of work so I advertised that I did house keeping duties, painting, etc.

Recently I placed another ad in the paper for one whole month from which I did not get one reply.

I have had considerable experience looking after the elderly with plenty of references and my rates are quite reasonable.

How come nobody saw this advertisement when there ap-

pears to be such a need to help

ings to help out.

I still have time on the occasional Saturday and some even-

Yours truly,  
Stephen Truchan,  
R.R. 2 Acton  
853-0281

## 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 Street, Georgetown, Ontario 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.