

Opinion

World Red Cross Day

World Red Cross Day, May 8, is a time when we can reflect on the efforts of Red Cross volunteers throughout the world, who work for the protection and preservation of human rights and dignity.

History will remember the First Geneva Convention of 1864, as the first text providing for the protection of the person, the human being. History will also remember Henry Dunant, founder of the Red Cross movement, for his ability to conceive of a permanent worldwide institution guaranteed by international law, to ensure at least a minimum of humanity in armed conflicts.

The cornerstones of this Red Cross mandate are the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols of June 1977. For Canadians traveling in conflict areas, these Geneva Conventions can take on real meaning for them.

May 8 can be a time for reflection at the Georgetown and District Red Cross Branch. Some of the ways volunteers worked to serve the community for the period on April 1, 1989 to March 3, 1990 have been the following:

- Through Emergency Driving Services, made 342 one-way trips for persons (primarily seivors) needing out-of-town medical appointments. They put in 665.1 volunteer hours to drive 15,630 km.
- Blood Donor Clinic volunteers held 11 blood donor clinics (seven in Georgetown, four in Acton) for a combined collection of 1996 units of blood.
- Fourteen referrals for help through the Individual Emergency Aid Service, provided aid on a short-term basis in the form of food, shelter or clothing. Volunteers had two referrals for help for people incurring some kind of minor disaster, such as a house fire.
- Fifty four people were given First Aid Training.
- Through the Water Safety program, 1265 persons received training.

World Red Cross Day gives us all an opportunity to reflect on the needs of others in our community and throughout the world.

Letter to the Editor

SWISC unresponsive to public

Dear editor:

Earth Day, is it already forgotten?

Tuesday, May 8, 1990 is the first in the next series of SWISC (Solid Waste Interim Steering Committee) public meetings at Sacre Coeur Church, 39 Guelph St., Georgetown, Ont., at 7 p.m.

I don't believe the committee is listening to the concerns of the public. If this group will not even accept the simplest of cosmetic suggestions from the people, how can we trust them to really come up with solid and environmentally sound solutions? At the Milton meeting in January 1990, it was advised to make it easier and try to attract a wider core of concerned citizens, not to use small ads and preregistration, and advertise the meetings as B.Y.O.M (Bring Your Own Mug). A lot of small savings add up over the long run.

It is time for the public to become better informed as to what is actually going on at these meetings. By your attending the first meeting we can get more people to attend the rest of the meetings and bare pressure on this committee and the governments to make some "real" decisions on this crisis.

Ordinary people can make a difference. With a possible fall election it is a great time to show what their voices can accomplish.

I am not a supporter of any political party or environmental group, just someone who is concerned about the way decisions are being made for me and my children's future.

So please attend for the introduction of "User Friendly Waste Reduction, Reuse, Recycling & Tax Plan," put forth by Jeff McColl. Show your readers/listeners that no matter what their ideas or opinions are, they should be heard and acted upon if they are right.

Please attend for all our sakes.

If you have any questions or require any information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 416-878-2565.

Jeff McColl
264 Sydney St., Milton



"JUST EXACTLY WHAT, AND HOW MUCH OF IT, WILL WE BE SHOWING THIS YEAR?!"

Words' Worth

Helping children become citizens

By ERIC BALKIND

The notion that we enjoy life in a country where the rights of the individual are cherished and where justice prevails and protects all citizens has recently taken a considerable beating.

To begin with, the Marshall Commission report in Nova Scotia has demonstrated how an entire system including the police, court officials, judges and politicians, connived together to protect their own interests even when their actions resulted in a gross injustice which came very close to destroying an innocent individual.

Can we understand the agony of Donald Marshall on being jailed for 11 years for a crime which he did not commit? Does anyone really believe that Donald Marshall is not scarred for life as the result of his handling by the Nova Scotian establishment?

The treatment which Mr. Marshall received is the logical and inescapable result of a political will which has consistently ignored the intent and meaning of treaties signed long ago in Nova Scotia between representatives of the crown and the local, native peoples.

A recent Globe and Mail report identified the one treaty which was supported by the Nova Scotian legislature; known as Mascarene's Treaty, it was signed in 1725. Curiously, it spelled out the Indians' obligations but said nothing about their rights—a remarkably convenient state of affairs for the powers that be. However, in 1984, a document which is apparently a missing part of the original showed up in the archives; known as Mascarene's Promises, it very clearly spelled out the rights of the original peoples to fish and hunt.

If you can understand what was going on when Donald Marshall was convicted, then you can guess what happened to Mascarene's Promises; they have been blatantly disregarded by the same government which had upheld the previously known portion of the agreement.

The current inquiry into alleged abuse at the Mount Cashel home for boys in Newfoundland has shown us more of the same. It is another twisted tale with just about everyone involved manoeuvring to

lay the blame on anyone else within reach.

Can you imagine the agony of the boys who reported that they were being beaten and molested and their fear when they realized nothing was going to be done about it? Does anyone honestly believe the victims of Mount Cashel will emerge unscathed from the pain of their ordeals?

All of which brings us back to the usual, critical question: How do we help our children to create a society which will not tolerate injustice and abuse? The only answer I know has to do with awareness and involvement, but that is a considerable challenge.

This is where parents have to become active by showing children that the only way to ensure change is to work for them; kids have to learn that it isn't enough to shake one's head and say "Too bad but what can I do?"

It means being prepared to discuss issues at the level of the children and taking the time to explain in ways which they can understand.

Some matters will be controversial and not easy to talk about but talk we must because it is through our involvement and example that children will learn that it is the right and the responsibility of citizens to speak up. The words of Junius (c. 1769) may be helpful in explaining why we must act:

"The subject who is truly loyal to the Chief Magistrate will neither advise nor submit to arbitrary measures."

There are many issues which deserve discussion and action and the best thing to do is simply to choose one and get going; children should learn that it isn't necessary to be an expert, but it is essential to care enough to become involved.

Many teachers, to their credit, do use current events in the attempt to help young people learn how to make informed, responsible decisions. Let's give them the support and understanding they deserve as they guide kids towards a more just and decent society. Better still, let's provide the ultimate support by showing our kids what it means to be "the subject who is truly loyal."

(Eric Balkind is a resident of Acton and former principal in the Halton school system.)

THE GEORGETOWN INDEPENDENT /
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Week End

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