

## WORD'S WORTH

With Eric Balkind



### Legal system needs a "regal" shake-up

I've been watching our judicial system at work and, to say the least, it's in a shambles. I'm also aware that there are both judges and lawyers who think the same — they know they've got an uphill battle on their hands to try to get things changed. Accordingly, it took me by surprise when one of our letter-writers claimed (Tanner, Sept. 16) that "on sexism and feminism, judges do not need to be taught lessons."

I took a look at my files and I rediscovered some remarkable cases which some readers will recall.

In 1989, a judge in Vancouver handed a suspended sentence to a man found guilty of assault against a 3-year-old and he described the tiny victim as being "sexually aggressive." This thoughtful judge also took into account the fact that, at the time of the incident, the accused was tired and under the influence.

In 1990, the prosecution of a Metro police constable for sexually assaulting a police cadet was deliberately stalled for two years so that he could retire on full pension. During the course of the two years, said constable (or rather, his lawyer together with some very agreeable judges) obtained adjournments of the case on 14 occasions.

What do we say of the judges who granted such stays in the due process of the law? The woman involved said later that, if she had known how long the case would take she "would never have filed the complaint."

In this case, it appears that the judges believed that an officer's pension was more important than justice for a woman.

A recent study (conducted, I believe, in Kingston) comparing the lengths of sentences handed out to men and to women revealed the fact that, for the same types of criminal behaviour, women almost always received heavier sentences.

It is now 1992 and nothing much has changed. Actually, the same distressing patterns which permeate the legal system are also at work in our immigration system. Recently, it took direct intervention through national newspaper publicity to prevent a Trinidadian woman from being deported to face certain brutality and probably death at the hands of her so-called husband. To make matters worse, we had obligingly let this brutal man stay in our country for quite a time before he was finally deported under conditions which worked out to his advantage.

And judges in Canada don't need educating? Don't you believe it. As things stand right now, I would not want any of the women in my family or any woman I know to be in court on either side of the bench for any reason. Truth is, there's not much justice for women in our society and there's no guarantee that things will change in the foreseeable future.

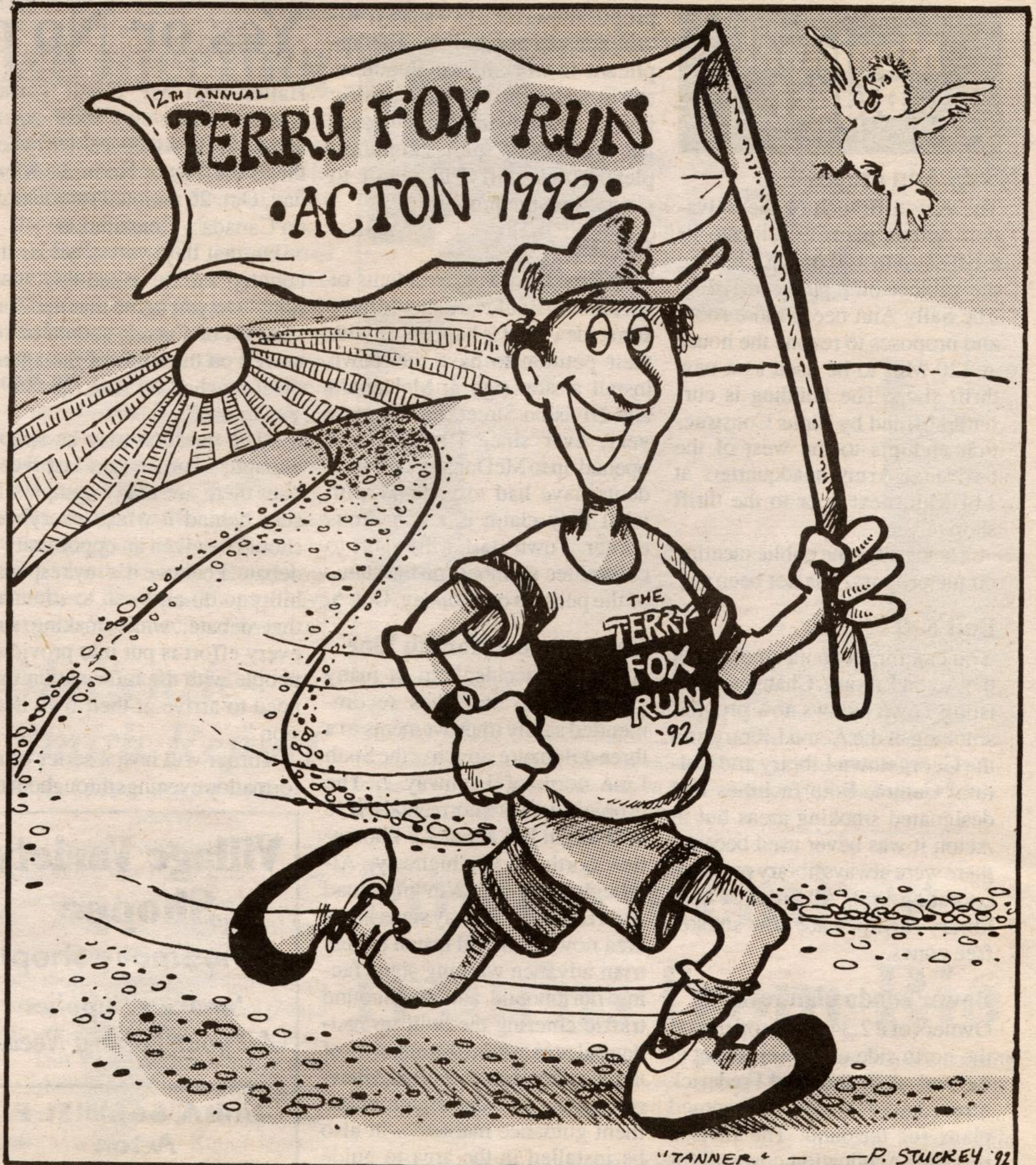
Education is the first of only two ways I know of changing outmoded views on the bench; the second way is to take swift action to retire the legal dinosaurs who still preside within our system. From where I sit, the sooner it all happens the better.

## Wit & Wisdom

Piet Hein is said to be "the most quoted man in Scandinavia." He began writing his grooks during the Nazi occupation of Denmark; they were, quite literally, underground literature because Piet Hein was, at that time, in hiding as a resistance leader. Grooks often enabled Danes to talk to each other about what really mattered at a time when open communications were difficult.

### Grook to stimulate gratitude

As things so very often are  
Intelligence won't get you far.  
So be glad you've got more sense  
Than you've got intelligence.  
Missing link  
Man's a kind of missing link,  
Fondly thinking he can think.  
Losing face  
The noble art of losing face  
May one day save the human race,  
And turn into eternal merit  
What weaker minds would call disgrace.  
Meeting the eye  
You'll probably find that it suits your book  
To be a bit cleverer than you look.  
Observe that the easiest method by far  
Is to look a bit stupider than you are.  
Living is —  
Living is a thing you do  
Now or never — which do you?



"TANNER" — P. STUCKEY '92

## LETTERS

### Questions Bill 109

To the Editor:

Why did the Government of Ontario introduce the Consent to Treatment Act (Bill 109), which allows a child under 16 to access the health care system without the knowledge of a parent?

Is it so that my 12-year-old daughter can start a new life-style

and have a chance to experiment with sex and drugs without the parent's knowledge?

Is it so that she will only be guided by peer pressure?

Is it so the state can "take care" of her in hospitals, abortuaries and psychiatrists' clinics without the parent's knowledge and consent?

Since parents have no say in the matter, are they excused from paying taxes for teenage health care?

Will Bob Rae and his caucus be prepared to pay for the costs of a ruined generation out of their own pockets?

Giuseppe Gori,  
R.R. 4, Acton

### More than one side

To the Editor:

To face disgrace, humiliation and embarrassment without any self-defense is not something we should inflict on our fellow-man. I would like to register my disappointment at the Tanner's policy of printing names and thus pointing a finger of accusation. I feel a dose of commonsense should be applied to each individual case.

In a small community it is inevitable that gossip travels quickly and presumptions are made which may not necessarily be correct, but are impossible to defend against. As Editor of your paper I would like to think that you will, in future, assess each case on a "need-to-know" basis. Printing a name in connection with an alleged offense can be very damaging.

There are many instances in which the public does need to know the name of an offender, to protect themselves. In the instance when you recently printed the name of an IGA teller accused of theft, I wonder just what good it did to print her name. The person involved was unable to defend her

reputation at the time of print and she is considered guilty by all who read your paper. And you just move onto the next article.

There is always more than one side to every story, and I would request that in future you take a good hard look at the item before printing names. In the case I have just mentioned, I hope your paper will follow-up with all the details of the case and get it straight.

Hoping for ... faith, hope and charity to your fellow-man.

(Name withheld on request)

### With Thanks

To the Acton Fall Fair Board:

We would like to express our appreciation of the educational program for our children by your committees.

The extended program was beneficial to all participants. The students enjoyed the hands-on activities provided.

You have given our community a better understanding of traditional home crafts and the importance that agriculture plays in our society.

Sincerely,  
Robert Little School Staff

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THE ACTON TANNER is published weekly on Tuesdays by Wicklow Hills Publishing Co. Inc. at 7 Mill Street, East, Acton, Ontario. L7J1G8. Mailing address: P.O. Box 150, Acton, Ont., L7J 2M3. Telephone: 519-853-5100. Facsimile: 519-853-5040. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Ideas expressed herein are those of the author only.

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