

EDITORIAL

With Frances Niblock



Privacy vs. right to know

A fear of the unknown took me by total surprise last week as I researched a story about a non-profit organization's purchase of two homes in Acton for people with psychiatric illnesses.

Oakville Re-Entry Homes has received funding from the Ministries of Housing and Health to buy two homes for clients currently living in groups homes or institutional settings.

As I interviewed Louise Sinclair, the non-profit groups spokesperson, I had no problem with the fact that she would not tell me where the homes were located.

Sinclair argued that the privacy of the prospective residents outweighed the community's need to know, in advance, where the houses were — and at first, I agreed with her.

Sinclair stressed that people chosen to live in the two homes would be carefully screened, and that no one with a history of violence, non-prescribed drug or alcohol use would be considered.

As Sinclair described the careful medical and social work monitoring of the two homes, I was convinced that the residents deserved a chance to move in and get settled without scrutiny from curious or concerned neighbours.

In describing the prospective tenants Sinclair was quick to downplay concerns that I felt neighbours might raise.

"Our folk are generally not party animals. Most are heavily medicated and in bed by 9:30. It's not exactly going to be a party house."

Sinclair also noted that the residents would be very carefully monitored and at the first sign of a problem or illness a doctor or social worker would be called.

I felt comfortable with all this until about an hour later when, pulling out of my driveway, I again saw the For Sale sign on my neighbour's lawn

All of a sudden I questioned my acceptance of Sinclair's arguments about the residents' privacy rights. I realized that I would have concerns about the safety of my young daughter, and worse, wondered what such a home would do to local property values.

I believe in the right to privacy and de-institutionalization but I also wonder about Oakville Re-Entry Home's decision to go "low key" on this project and not inform the community about what was happening in their midst.

I know little about mental illness and that ignorance fuels my concerns. I like to think I would welcome the residents with a warm hello and a plate of cookies if they moved in next door, but the fear of the unknown is powerful.

Sinclair said it will be very evident to nearby homeowners who is moving in on April 1. Wouldn't it make more sense to educate the neighbours beforehand and explain to them the safeguards that are built in to this project?

I think the non-profit group is missing a perfect opportunity to do a little public education and ease themselves into the community.

Wit & Wisdom

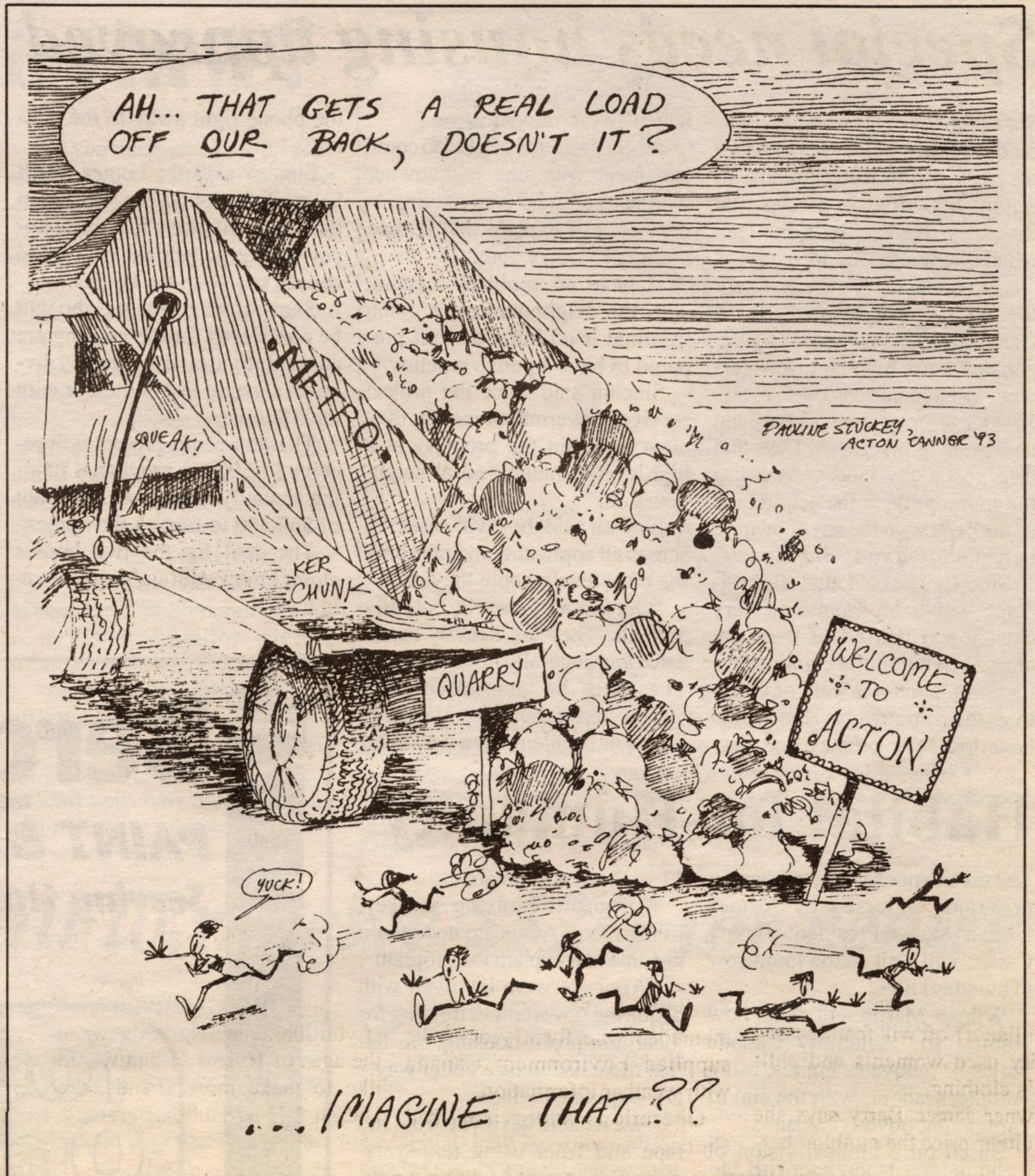
Wherever you stand on matters and whatever you believe, it's generally wise to remember that there's likely another way of looking at the issue. Those who neglect this simple fact are likely to get "caught out in left field" by those who haven't forgotten.

"My son's intelligence comes from me," bragged Mr. Pompenstine. His wife remarked, "I quite agree — because I've still got mine."

"I agree," said the psychologist, "that your son may have a spark of genius. However, in my opinion, he also has some ignition trouble."

A little boy was given a full-grown St. Bernard for his birthday. He looked with delight and wonder at the dog and finally asked his parents, "Is he mine or am I his?"

They say that it is better to be poor and happy than rich and miserable. But couldn't something be worked out, such as being moderately rich and just moody?



Calling all Acton High graduates of '79

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK

Where are you Byron Anger? Anybody seen Dan Webster or Alice Klaver?

Organizers of the 15th anniversary reunion of Acton High School have contacted almost all of the 120 grads from 1978-79 to invite them to the reunion, but can't find Bryan, last seen in Barrie, or Dan, last seen in Kitchener, or Alice, last seen in Guelph.

Co-organizer Patti (Gordon) Knapton said they've sent two letters to graduates inviting them to the reunion and are anxiously waiting for dance ticket orders.

"We've been talking about having a reunion for quite a while but it all came together last January when a group of us decided it was time," Knapton said in an interview Wednesday.

"We've spent most of our time trying to track down grads. Every-

one we've told has been excited and now we need their ticket orders for the dance which will cost \$15 per person. There won't be any tickets at the door."

Although the invitations were sent to grads, Knapton said any student or teacher who was at the school in 1978-79 is welcome.

Co-organizer Elaine (Foster) Petkoff says the Grade 13 grads held a five year reunion, but this event, planned for Saturday, April 24, will be a joint get-together for the first Grade 12 and 13 classes to graduate from the newly-opened school.

So far, the plans call for a family afternoon, possibly a school tour and then the dance at the Acton Legion.

If you know how to contact Bryan, Dan or Shelia, or want more info about the reunion, call Elaine at 853-0104 or Patti at 853-4728.



Write a Letter to the Editor.

The pages of the Tanner are an excellent way for citizens to exchange ideas, debate issues and share points of view. Don't get lost in the crowd — speak out!

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THE ACTON TANNER is published weekly on Wednesdays by Wicklow Hills Publishing Co. Inc. at 7 Mill Street, East, Acton, Ontario. L7J 1G8. Mailing address: P.O. Box 150, Acton, Ont., L7J 2M3. Telephone: 519-853-5100. Facsimile: 853-5040. Ideas expressed herein are those of the author only.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Subscription rates are: \$28.80 for one year (52 issues for the price of 48) and \$4.80 for two months (eight issues). First Class Mail subscription rate: \$74 in Canada.

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