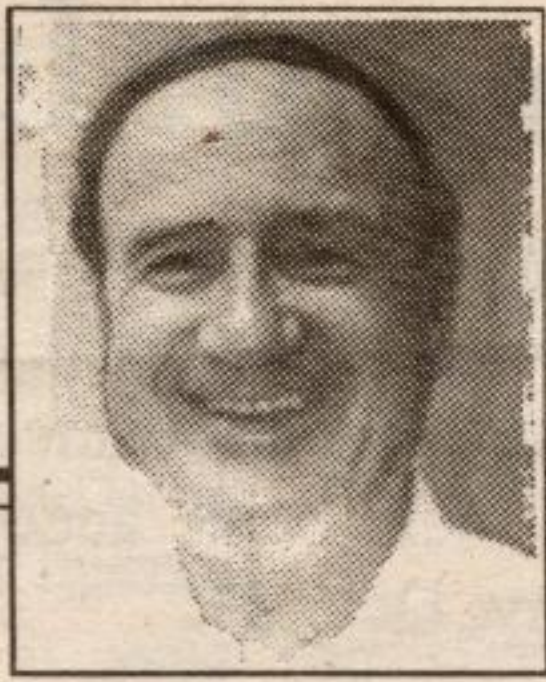


## EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



### Acton's fate in our hands

This writer's ambivalence about the impact of Regional Government on Acton and area has probably been well demonstrated the last few weeks. You've probably deduced I think Acton benefited fiscally from the imposition but suffered a marked decline in community spirit and enterprise.

That community spirit is still there but much of it has been eclipsed by unpopular policies from governments of all political stripes. We'd be more optimistic if we felt governments were our partners instead of opponents in building a better and more vibrant community.

Want some examples? Remember when the Federal government closed the Acton customs office as an economy measure. It made Acton less attractive to new business and industry and more difficult to retain existing ones. It was done with little protest from Otto Jelinek, our MP at the time.

In spite of the fact that the C.N. railway station in Acton was a hub of industry, the federal Liberals allowed the railway to close it. The MP then was Rud Whiting and he made an impassioned appeal in his maiden speech in the House to save it. All to no avail.

The railway contended they could serve Acton's freight needs by transport truck from a central depot in Guelph. Passengers? Well, they could embark or disembark from passenger trains in Guelph or Georgetown — and find their own way home. As a sop the transport commission ordered C.N. to keep one train a day stopping from either direction, but made the schedule so inconvenient that service was soon closed.

How many CN trucks do you see delivering freight here these days? Few, if any. Yet the trains keep thundering through, too busy to stop at this and many other small towns they demolished with their downsizing policies.

The last Federal presence in Acton, the post office, is the latest to be threatened by closure. It probably would have been done by now except for the unpopularity of similar closings in the hamlets and villages across the country. Canada Post is a Crown Corporation but it won't hesitate to shut down facilities in the smaller places if it can save money.

The lesson we in Acton should absorb is obviously not to depend too heavily on governments as partners in encouraging the revitalization of Acton.

We need more entrepreneurs like the Dawkins family, whose olde Hide House and Blue Springs Golf Club pulled Acton up by its bootstraps when things looked pretty grim. They saw opportunity when almost everyone else saw gloom. Now Maple Leaf Foods' have closed the Tannery buildings; Fred Dawkins has seen another opportunity to fashion an attractive business mall instead of derelict buildings.

His proposal calls for a return to the days when government and business worked together for the betterment of the community. It's a challenge we can't ignore.

This issue is not yet over; more next week!



**MUSICAL INTERLUDE:** Members of the Acton Citizens' Band entertained listeners at their afternoon tea Sunday at the Band Hall. Guests were entertained with the music of the Christmas season. (Tony Rouse photo)



## LETTERS

### Acton must look ahead

To the Editor,

I have read for the past few weeks, the articles about Maple Leaf Foods' lands in Acton. I shook my head in wonder at the editorial cartoon that showed a padlock on the old Tannery gates and I held my tongue, but I cannot remain silent much longer.

Mike O'Leary and the other dinosaurs that have taken up the banner, have completely failed to comment on one aspect of these lands — they are private property! If Maple Leaf Foods' wants to board up the buildings and otherwise deny access to their property, it is their business. The economics may not make sense, but again, that is their business.

In regards to people potentially entering the property and injuring themselves in the old buildings, well that's too bad, that's trespassing! If you hadn't been where you weren't supposed to be, the injury would not have happened.

Beardmore Tannery was largely responsible for making Acton what

it is, in the boom times and the bust times. Acton has learned the hard way the danger of being a one industry town, and to keep looking at the Tannery (in this case, the Tannery lands) as being responsible for Acton's economic woes, not only dooms Acton to remain a static economic entity, but encourages people to enter into businesses that may not make it in the "real world," because of the artificially low overhead at the old tannery.

Perhaps the best thing for Acton would be for the Tannery buildings to be completely levelled. Then there would be no constant reminder looming on the horizon as to what we once were.

If Acton is to survive as a viable economic entity in the next century, we need people who can look forward and see what could be, not people who remain shackled to the past.

The Dawkins family have shown us what a group of determined individuals can accomplish. Perhaps we should look to them for insight, instead of the Beardmore family.

Dave Loewen, Acton

P.S. Regarding PCB storage — Read the environmental report in the final issue of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters magazine.



### Write a letter to the editor

Send or bring it to our office at 12 Church St. E.  
or fax it to us at 853-5040

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