

ACROSS THE FENCE

With Joanne Stevenson



Where were you when the lights went out?

For the second time in as many weeks, Acton suffered a bout of *Hydrous Interruptus*. For about 2½ hours on Saturday afternoon, homes and businesses were without electricity.

It's one thing to be without power at night — you can snuggle up in front of the fire and play *Monopoly* — but it's quite something else when the power goes out during the day.

While it's very romantic to shop by candlelight, it is a nuisance when you get to the cash register. The clerks know the computer codes for the products in the store, but no one knows the prices. I don't know who got to ring in the sales when the power finally came back on, but I don't envy them the job.

The same is true at the library, gas stations, restaurants, laundromats... when the system is down a business can't function anymore.

I have a love-hate relationship with electronic equipment; it can make your life easier by doing the boring, repetitive jobs for you, and I love that. But I hate that I have to interact with machines. What does it mean when you talk to an appliance, anyway?

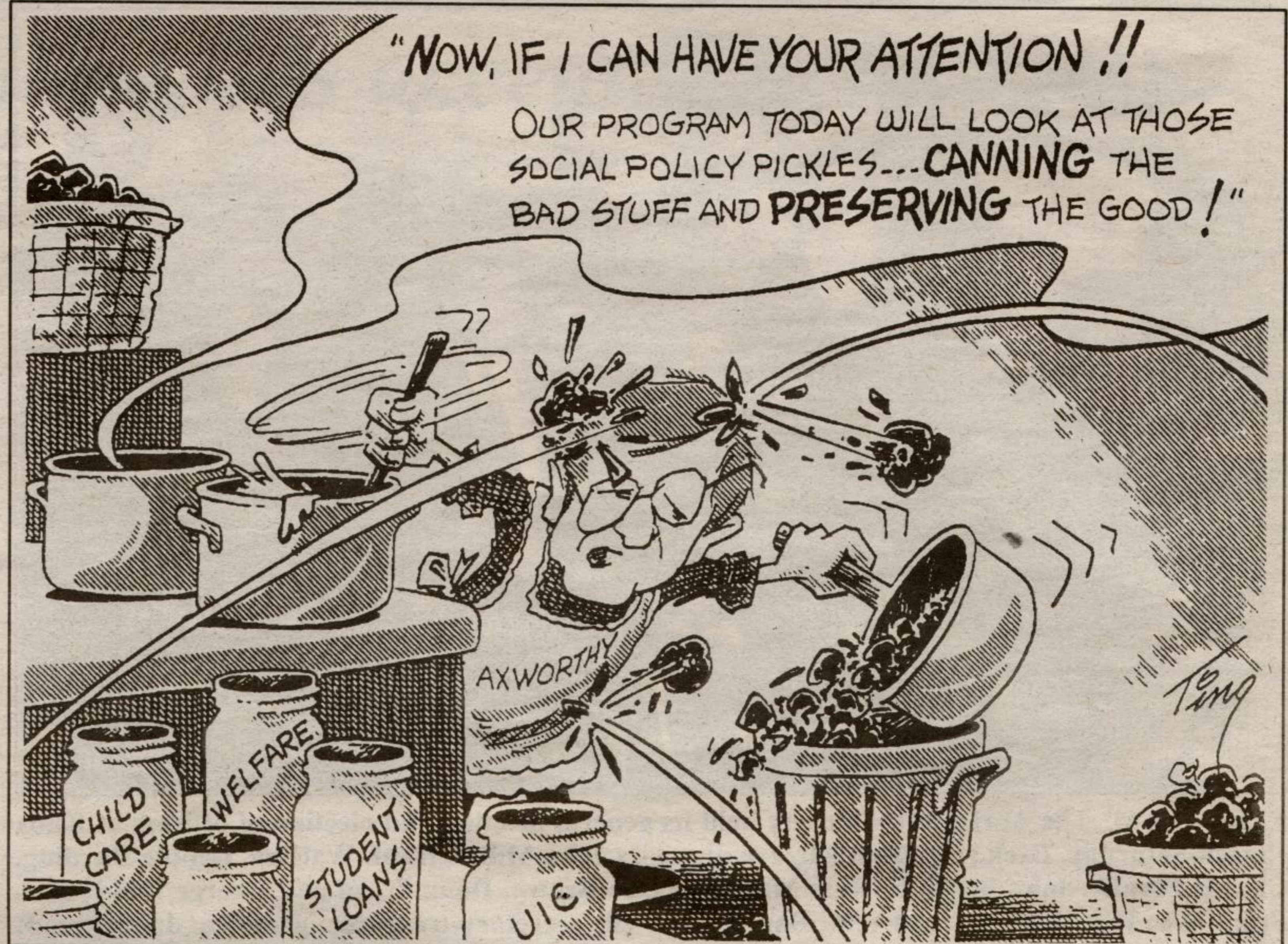
Computers ask "Are you sure you want to copy that file?" Photocopy machines advise you "Tray empty. Please reload." My car sounds like an evening at the *Organ Grinder* restaurant, with all the pinging and dinging when seatbelts are undone or the gas level is low or the headlights are left on. It's like something out of a Stephen King novel. Should we be afraid when machines have this much control over our lives?

With the power out on Saturday, it meant no TV, no VCR, no Sega or Nintendo, no radio and no phone — not necessarily a bad thing. It also meant no vacuuming or laundry — definitely a good thing. And since I filled the propane tank for the barbecue earlier in the week, I wasn't worried about how to cook dinner.

Like living in the wilderness with only your wits and a pocket knife to rely on, we survived Saturday afternoon. We all felt a great sense of triumph; somehow we had conquered adversity, together!

We've even adjusted the timers on the clocks, radios, furnace, microwave and water softener. There's only the VCR clock left to change, and it's been flashing midnight since long before the power was out.

But as I head out the door this morning with the washing machine buzzing, the dryer humming, the dishwasher running, the timer on my oven set to have dinner ready when I return, and the answering machine ready to take my calls, I am grateful for the machines in my life, and the electricity that keeps them going.



LETTERS

We want to choose!

To the Editor,

I am one more dissatisfied customer of Halton Cable Systems. In December, when I went to pay my bill, I complained about the forced changes about to happen with some of our cable channels, as of Jan. 1995.

A few years ago, when I wanted the sports channel (TSN) and the Arts and Entertainment channel (A&E) and a few other channels that were offered in the package deal, I bought the package.

Now, if I don't accept this new Valu-Pak with seven more channels, which I do not need, want or can afford, they will take away the package with TSN and A&E that I previously subscribed to and still want.

When I complained in December, I was told it was not their fault and that I should complain to CRTC. They even gave me their address in Ottawa. I immediately wrote CRTC, Ottawa K1A 0N2. Many thousands of Canadians also complained to the CRTC and they got favourable results from their cable companies. In fact, Rogers

Cable back-tracked and now allows their customers to choose what they want and are not taking away TSN and A&E.

When I went to pay my January cable bill last week and told them I was upset with their recent article in our newspaper, I was told that only one per cent of Halton Cable customers have complained.

Are there so many apathetic customers in Halton Hills that they are accepting this forced Valu-Pak or else? I believe that the board of Halton Cable Systems have made a mistake. We, their customers, live in a democratic society and should be able to choose and pay for what we want to watch.

I also believe that Halton Cable should not be allowed to take away TSN or A&E if we do not accept this new Valu-Pak. Today, good business does not operate in this manner.

Come on customers of Halton Cable, get on your horse and show them we want to choose and pay for what we wish to watch. If the new channels offer good programs, they will sell themselves.

How come Rogers Cable can offer two months of free viewing to its customers? This is to enable them to watch and choose what they want. Why can't Halton Cable do likewise?

S. Brunelle
Acton Boulevard

I hate pollution!

(Editor's note: Again this week we are publishing two letters from students in Mrs. Clevely's Grade 4 class at Robert Little. The students recently completed a 'Space-ship Earth' study unit.)

To the Editor,
I love this world but it keeps on eating the ozone layer.

In the summer I love to play in the leaves. I would love to see

peace on Earth.

I love the flowers and trees, but I do not love the acid rain. It is killing the trees, flowers and ozone.

If I had a choice I would try to make this world be a peace zone.

I hate pollution. It is going to eat the whole ozone layer.

We are learning about the atmosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and lithosphere.

Samantha Denesha
Age 9

Please don't litter

Dear World,

I feel that we should stop polluting.

Hi! My name is Chris and I'm from Robert Little school. We should not litter or all the animals will die and we don't want that to

happen.

Please don't throw garbage on our beautiful Earth. If you don't stop littering, the Earth will be dirty and the water will be dirty, too.

Please don't litter!

Chris Koebel
Age 9

LETTERS

How lucky ...

To the Editor,

Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are? is the title of an old, favourite Dr. Seuss book. The citizens of Halton Hills, and for that matter, Halton Region, just may not realize how lucky they are.

After Reclamation Systems Inc. (RSI — the company that wanted to fill the Acton quarry with garbage) dropped the ball at the preliminary hearing by not having the required documentation ready, our North Halton MPP, Noel Duignan, pushed ahead with a private member's bill to ban landfills from the Niagara Escarpment.

Seeing the David and Goliath

situation that small communities were faced with when targeted by a landfill proposal, Noel kept working on his solution to protecting the Escarpment. With so many river systems originating in the Escarpment, most MPPs could see that if the headwaters could not be protected, there would be no hope for the remainder of the waterway. The Niagara Escarpment had already been recognized as significant by the Province and by the United Nations but the possibility of garbage dumps still existed.

Now we have a chance to celebrate Bill 62 and the lifting of the cloud that has hung over our community. Feb. 18 you can be part of a celebration with a dinner and dance where Premier Rae will formally congratulate MPP Duignan.

We should be dancing in the streets. But since it is so cold, isn't it nice that we can do it inside.

Barbara Halsall
Past-president, POWER

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