

EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



Quarry follies

How long are the farcical moves and counter moves between United Aggregates Limited and various government departments going to continue before the Province gives them a final and unequivocal "No" to their Acton quarry dump proposal?

Taxpayers have to keep putting their hands into their pockets to fight proposals that are clearly not in the best interests of the town or the quarry's neighbours.

The latest moves on the quarry's part has Town staff proposing another \$75,000 be added to the 1995 budget for legal fees to continue the fight against a proposed dump in the quarry. Those pockets have not got an endless source of dollars, especially to be employed fighting for what should be patently obvious.

The quarry sits astride the Niagara Escarpment in one of the most picturesque and environmentally sensitive parts of Halton Hills. Permits have allowed the mining of the quarry on both sides of 20 Sideroad; the Third Line was moved to accommodate the business of extracting the limestone. Quarry officials have been given every consideration over the years to expedite business.

The quarry has been a good corporate citizen and employer over the years, until they got a bee in their collective bonnets that the hole they created would make a great depository for garbage.

In its latest maneuver, United Aggregates wants to pump 500,000 gallons of water a day from the southern end of the quarry to facilitate their operation. Neighbours, understandably worried that the amount and quality of the water proposal, should there be approval, opposed it. As did POWER, the body formed to protect the water and environmental resources.

Fortunately, the Ontario Court of Appeals, to which the company appealed after they were turned down initially, ruled the company must get a development permit from the Niagara Escarpment Commission before it can pump any water. The court ruled the proposal would have a significant impact on the natural environment, on ground water and natural springs. The discharge could also affect the water in the Black Creek and the headwaters of Sixteen Mile Creek.

The Black Creek flows from Fairy Lake in Acton adjacent to the quarry through the area know as Dolly Varden, into the Credit River before emptying into Lake Ontario. Sixteen Mile Creek, also a tributary of Lake Ontario, flows through the Scotch Block and Milton. The quality of the water in both tributaries has been continually monitored. For instance, development in Acton has been at a standstill for years because of an imagined threat to the fish in Black Creek. It would seem logical to assume then, that any other threat to water quality would be treated with the same disapproval.

Either the company thought the change in government would result in far looser environmental controls or they actually believed moving operations to the south side of 20 Sideroad (Regional Road 43) was not a new development, but a continuation of ongoing mining from the north side of the road. Or perhaps, as Barbara Halsall of POWER suggests, the decision to appeal the original ruling is tied to the proposed plan by Reclamation Services Limited Inc. to turn the mined out section, north of the road, into a dump.

Repeated refusals to permit a landfill site there has had little effect on the company's determination to pursue the huge landfill project. Yet, if memory serves, the original quarry owners were given approval to mine the escarpment provided they carried out plans to reclaim the pit as a recreational area. The company painted a glowing picture of what they would do with that huge hole in the ground when they were finished extracting aggregate.

Drawings from the company showed a shining lake, adjoining golf links and tidy cottages clustered along the shore. Funding for this piece of Esquing heaven would be provided by the extraction fees for each ton of aggregate mined. Company officials envisioned an idyllic lifestyle, a place of pastoral and natural beauty that would charm the socks off the rustics in this neck of the woods.

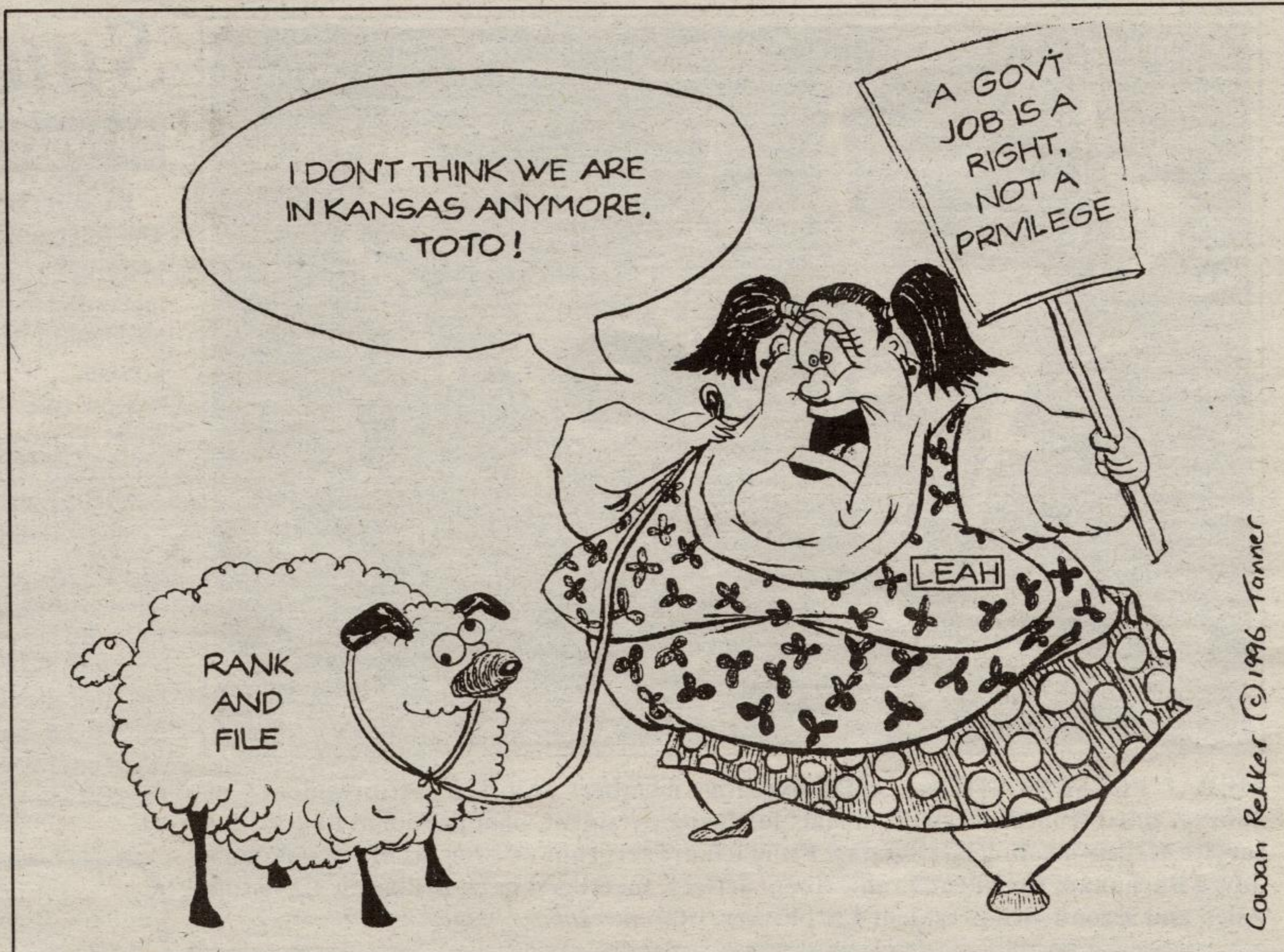
Now it's another story. No beauty spot. No lake. No cottages. No boats sailing along still waters. Just a huge hole filled with garbage, most of it probably Toronto's.

From the sublime to the ridiculous. And to defend this fiefdom we have to shell out tax dollars by the tens of thousands.

Why not just demand the quarry follow the first reclamation project? It would provide employment and revenue ad infinitum. And maybe we'd like the company again.

Here's a tip of the chapeau to the Town works' department for the job they did cleaning up the streets after Mother Nature dumped about a foot of snow on us last Wednesday, ironically the first day of spring.

Traffic was back to normal by Thursday even though snow kept falling in vicious squalls that completely ignore the calendar.



LETTERS

Arena highs and lows

To the Editor,

The last time I felt compelled to direct a letter to the editor of a newspaper was in 1988. The newspaper was different. The editorialist was, however, the same 'humble scribe,' Hartley Coles, and the issue was the same - the Acton arena.

Hartley has long been recognized as a proud and staunch defender of Acton, who ardently promotes its history and concerns. That loyalty formed the basis of his 1988 editorial, when he decried the removal of the Acton arena project from the Town's capital forecast. I believe Hartley's comments at that time were honest and legitimate. There was no firm plan in place to replace the old Acton arena. No location. No specific budget. No apparent commitment from Council.

In hindsight, I am absolutely convinced that Council of the day made the right decision by proceeding instead with the desperately needed municipal centre.

Hartley's editorial in last week's issue of *The Tanner* is a different story. It is, in my opinion, unfair, unresearched, unnecessarily cynical and even, to some observers, a touch mean-spirited.

Hartley is not working in a vacuum. Your newspaper has a very competent reporter covering virtually all meetings of Council and most recently, budget committee. Had there been any consultation between the two prior to the publishing of the editorial, he should have been aware of some of the following important facts:

- A budget figure of \$4.1 million for the building, plus an additional \$1 million for servicing, has been in the Town's capital budget since 1995. Hardly a "matchbox" facility. There has been no effort on the part of any member of Council to reduce or eliminate those figures since the 1994 election. Contrary to the editorial, there has been almost unanimous support from all councillors.

- To her credit, Mayor Serjeantson, since being elected mayor, has consistently promoted the Acton arena project as the Town's number

one priority.

- Hartley says nothing has happened since 1988 to make him change his mind. I submit a great deal has happened.

- In 1995, Halton Hills purchased eight acres of land in Acton East, to be the site for our new community centre/arena complex.

- The aforementioned spirit of co-operation on the part of this current Council led to the 1996 Budget Committee passing without hesitation, on March 19, the necessary funding for the arena replacement.
- Not one acrimonious word or trace of parochialism surfaced during the 1996 budget discussion, up to its approval last week. That is, until your editorial.

For the record, by the time Acton citizens read this, barring some last minute, totally unexpected change of heart, Halton Hills Council will have formally passed the 1996 budget. Total budget for the arena project, including services, is over \$5 million. Target date for official opening is November 1997.

Finally, allow me to make one incontestable point. Hartley, your comments about my determination to see this project through were very gratifying. You do, however, by omission, commit an injustice to my colleagues on Council, Rick Bonnette and Gerald Rennie. My efforts have been no more diligent than theirs, my commitment no greater. No one has been more vocal than Rick, and in Gerald's case, no one has been more committed to ensuring Acton area seniors will share in the pleasures of the new facility. You owe them equal recognition for their efforts.

Politics, like life in general, has its high points and its lows. One of the 'highs' in my political involvement occurred last Tuesday evening. An issue that I had fought for, for over 10 years, was finally realized with budget approval of the Acton arena. One of the low points occurred the very next day, when I read *The Tanner* editorial.

Let's hope that now the project is finally approved, all future editorials can be supportive and constructive. The support of your newspaper is vital in ensuring the timely completion of a great new community facility. One we can all look to with pride.

Norm Elliott,
Ward 1 Councillor

MORE LETTERS ON PAGE 9

THE ACTON Tanner

'Neighbourhood News' from
Acton's Award-Winning
Hometown Newspaper

Publisher & Editor
Paul Nolan

General Manager
Hartley Coles

Advertising Manager
Elaine Petkoff

Editorial Staff
Karen Wetmore
Frances Niblock

Copy Editor
Joanne Stevenson

Office Assistant
Sharon Steckley

Distribution Manager
Irene Birrell

Regular Contributors
Eve Martin
Mike O'Leary

THE ACTON TANNER is published weekly on Wednesdays by Wicklow Hills Publishing Co. Inc. at 12 Church St., E., Acton, Ontario, L7J 1K4. Mailing address: P.O. Box 150, Acton, Ont., L7J 2M3. Telephone: 519-853-5100. Fax: 853-5040. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. Ideas expressed herein are those of the author only.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Rates are: \$28.80 for one year (50 issues for price of 48) and \$4.80 for two months (eight issues).

ADSALES: Publisher is responsible for errors in advertisements to extent of cost of that portion of the space occupied by erroneous item.

Publications Mail Registration
Number 10457

PHONE:
519-853-5100

FAX:
519-853-5040



Member of the Ontario Community Newspapers
Association and of the Canadian Community
Newspapers Association