

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Old arena an asset

Acton's old arena in Prospect Park may not fall to the wrecker's ball after all if the Acton Agricultural Society can devise a business plan to save it. And a structural report says it is safe to use.

The Town of Halton Hills has postponed the planned demolition until after this year's fall fair, following a plea from Fair Board treasurer Daniel Varanelli at a meeting of the budget committee last week. The town had earmarked \$110,000 in last year's budget to tear the structure down after receiving a report from the town engineer estimating it would cost \$275,000 to repair.

Mr. Varanelli suggested that council reallocate the \$110,000 ticketed for demolition to repairing the arena. He told councillors it would be a positive step if the arena could be saved.



And he's right. After all, it would cost in the millions of dollars to replace that old structure today. Why tear something down that has always been a positive influence in the town and would cost millions to replace. Economics?

Councillor Norm Elliott has noted the building on its site beside the lake has a lot of potential. It is also safe to use providing the roof snow load is monitored during the winter months. It is not a liability.

One reason why Acton Fair has earned the sobriquet, "the best little fair in Ontario," is the use of the old arena for displaying the thousands of entries in crafts, school work, baking, etc. It is also used for the Miss Acton Fall Fair contest and other things such as dog shows, cat shows, etc., etc.

Yes, we understand the arena is kaput as an ice facility, as Councillor Elliott pointed out. However, there are so many other uses it could still provide space for they are too many to mention. One suggested use was for roller blade hockey. In fact, the Guelph roller blade hockey league is looking for just such a facility.

Meanwhile, in a conciliatory mood from the "let's wreck it" syndrome, councillors agreed to a six month "stay of execution" until they can determine whether the \$110,000 repair plan is feasible. Mr. Varanelli has also agreed to ask the agricultural society if it will assume half the cost of the ongoing operating costs of hydro, gas, electricity and insurance during the six month period of grace.

He'll also ask them if they would accept the building outright without any town money and consider the \$110,000 in the budget as a loan.

The decision to delay any demolition for six months gives the agricultural society time to consider other arena uses and determine how much it would REALLY cost to repair it. We think it's worth the effort.

In the event neither of these schemes works perhaps Mike Harris would consider it as a place for one of his charity casinos. Egad.

## Holy Week's threshold

Perhaps a lot of us never noticed in the hurly-burly of day-to-day activities but we are in the midst of the season of Lent. In fact, we are on the threshold of Holy Week, the greatest dates in the Christian calendar.

Churches in Acton have been holding combined mid-week services at St. Joseph's Church with each denomination taking turns leading the noon hour services and providing a lunch afterwards. Several hundred have attended as well as attending their own church services on the weekends.

As we enter Holy Week and the commemoration of Jesus Christ's last days on earth before His crucifixion, the holy days of the Easter season become more and more significant.

Good Friday, only a week from tomorrow, and Easter are the most sacred days in the lives of millions of Canadians who follow the way of the cross and resurrection.



**GRATEFUL THANKS:** Salvation Army Acton Corp Captain Larry Jennings (right), holds a certificate of appreciation from the Salvation Army, Ontario South Division, in thanks for a \$500 donation to eastern Ontario and Quebec ice storm relief efforts, money collected during the Acton churches' Christian unity service in January. With Jennings are Acton Baptist Pastor Tom Cullen (left), Pieter Van Harten of Knox Presbyterian and Father Dave Reilander of St. Joseph's. — Frances Niblock photo

## New business ethic builds unions

By **MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY**  
The New Tanner

I get unexpected telephone calls often and usually shrug them off. Recently I got a very disturbing one from an old friend. Try as I can, I can't seem to shake it. It repeats a story I keep hearing and overhearing repeatedly as people worry about their jobs.

Tim and I worked together years ago and have kept in touch because he felt our former boss was out to fire him. That sort of feeling is usually put down to paranoia until you discovered everyone in the office had the same sensation to a greater or lesser degree.

When Tim called last time the anxiety in his tone prepared me to hear his fears had materialized. Instead I learned his wife had just been hauled into her boss' office and given a written warning to "shape up or else". Elaine has worked with the same insurance company for more than five years and been promoted several times in that period. Suddenly, with the appearance of a new boss, she is now incompetent.

Do I smell a rat?

That's precisely what happened with Tim and everyone else in our old office. I know. I was there while it happened and have never been more relieved to leave a job in my life.

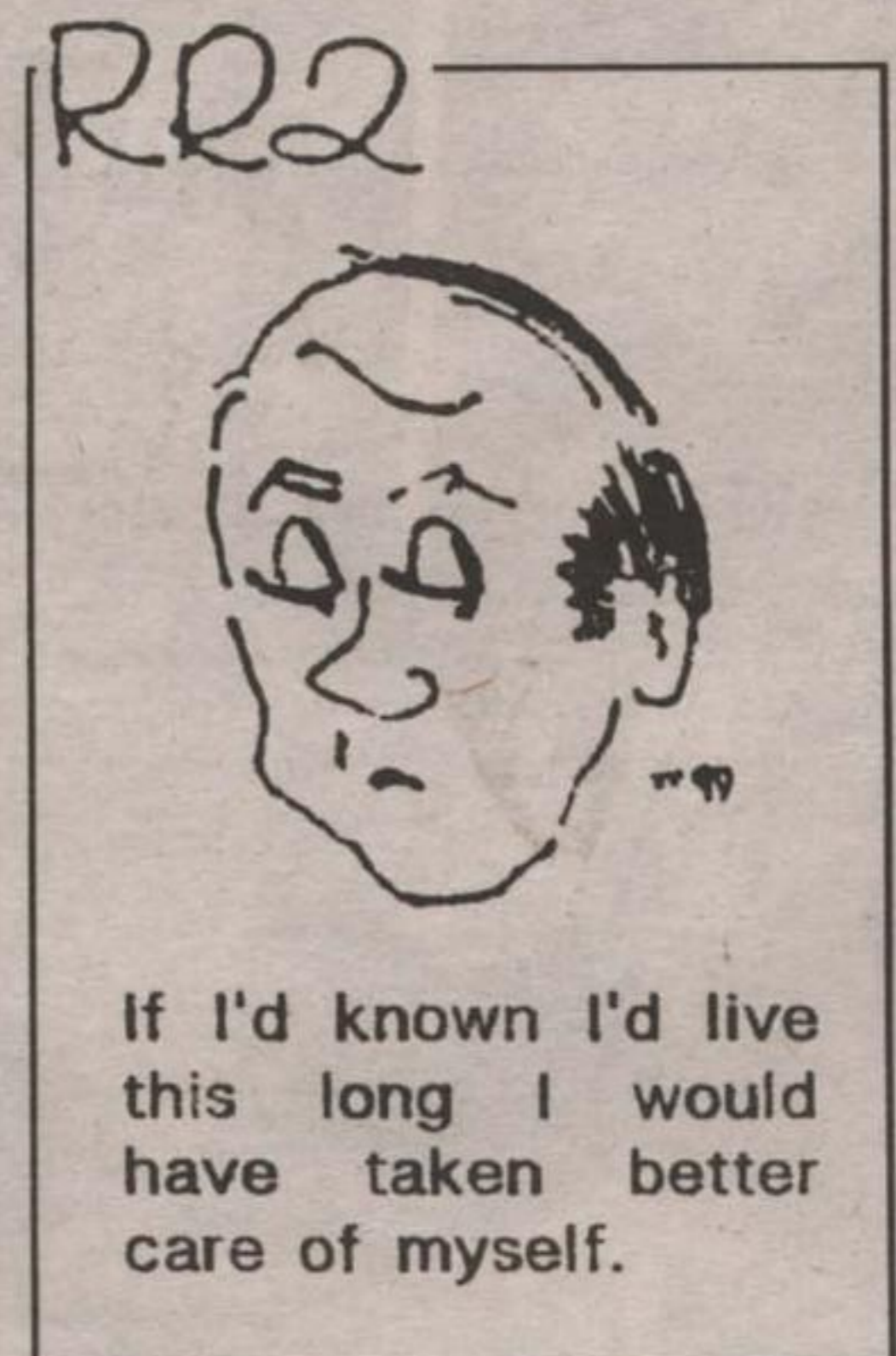
On the surface it is possible that a lot of incompetent people hold down jobs. A closer look, coupled with a news feature I recently saw on the new business outlook, points to a different picture. The reporter interviewing a professor from the London School of Economics,

couldn't seem to get it through to this business leader that people matter.

The professor was so busy expounding the savings business makes by reducing workforces he didn't even understand the reporter's questions about the impact on the people these businesses displaced. Listening to Elaine it was obvious her boss thinks any experienced employee is an expense to be removed. If a machine can't do it, at least a much lower paid novice staffer can replace her.

I got the call from Tim and Elaine because they wanted advice on how to deal with her boss. What protection does the Employment Standards Act offer, since her office is not unionized?

I am no expert. I don't even particularly support unions. I have however, discovered their benefit since



encountering this new type of business ethic. The government can preach all it wants about there being no more need for unions. They were less necessary evils in the 1960s and 1970s than they are today. Back then corporations still considered people as part of their business and expected to deal with them. Today's employer just wants us all to drop off the face of the earth. Our only purpose is as a consumer. Mind you, we are not allowed to saddle these firms with taxes to cover the cost of the welfare they keep driving us to. We're not even allowed to think industry owes anything to the nation in which it resides, according to the professor. That's "outmoded thinking".

I remember in the early 1960s my ex was making 50 cents a week more as a labourer with the Department of Highways than he did sitting at home on unemployment insurance when the paper mill laid off workers every winter. From that 50 cents he had to pay his costs to drive 10 miles to a job and pay for clothing capable of keeping out January temperatures near Cochrane. Staying home would have been much cosier and cheaper too. But he wanted to pay his own way.

Unionizing government jobs increased salaries to at least offer an incentive to work. Listening to people say the unions have gone too far is to ignore the present reality. Unions are a response to a situation. No one joins a union because they want to pay dues. They join because their bosses drive them to it.

If these "experts" keep on they'll spark a membership drive no union organizer could hope to equal.



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59 Willow Street North  
Acton, Ontario  
L7J 1Z8

(519) 853-0051 Fax: 853-0052

**Publisher** Ted Tyler

**Editorial**

Hartley Coles Maggie Petrushevsky  
Frances Niblock Ellen Piehl  
Mike O'Leary Angela Tyler

**Advertising Sales** Lynne Burns  
Dianne Preston

**Circulation** Marie Shadbolt

**Composing** Karen Wetmore

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