

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Part of our heritage

Although the old Beardmore plant ceased operation in September of 1986, the raging fire which swept through the light leather side on Tuesday came as a shock. Black smoke visible from as far away as Mississauga and from Highway 401 was an alarming feature of the blaze which was confined largely due to the efforts of the firefighters. There was some fear that chemicals stored in the old buildings might contribute toxic materials to air which was already heavy with pollen and sultry weather. However, as firefighters pointed out the toxic PCBs on the property are tucked well away from the main buildings. There was never any danger from them.

Nevertheless, the ferocity of the fire and the possibility flames could spread to neighboring buildings was an alarming thought until the fire was brought under control. Firefighters were fearful a tunnel which exists from the office building into what was once the Wool Combing plant could represent a dangerous situation but it was under control before it could happen.

Former employees of Beardmore who were at the fire scene watched, noting the flames were fed by the grunge which accumulates in any industrial plant which operated for over 150 years. The first tannery on the site was built by Abraham Nelles in 1842 and there have been two or three fires since then, one in 1872. Another in the 1930s wiped out part of the plant.

Although there are only a few people left taking care of the grounds the Beardmore plant has been an integral part of Acton and many of its people over 150 years so it is only natural there should be so much interest in it. Leather from this tannery, which once covered almost 93,000 square metres, has been part of the Canadian scene for that century and a half. Canadian armies in two world wars marched on Beardmore sole leather and much of the belts which drove machinery around the world originated in Acton.

So the Beardmore tannery although it may not be the Taj Mahal or even a pleasant industrial enterprise is nevertheless part of our heritage.

Sad testament

It is nothing new when churches are robbed and vandalized like they were in Acton on May 10 but it certainly makes us realize that nothing is sacred to some thieves, fed perhaps by drug habits. It used to be poor boxes that were the target for thieves in city churches. Now it is anything which will bring the thieves money.

At one time churches could be left open during the daylight hours all week but now it seems they must be kept locked at all times except when services are being held. As Rev. Mark Tiller of St. Alban's remarked, "... this is a sad testament to our society."

What can be done to ensure places of worship are not vandalized and robbed? Maybe congregations will have to go the way of some households and see that alarm bells are rung when someone gains unlawful entry. With so many using a facility, of course, it becomes a real logistical problem. Who turns off the alarm? Who sets the alarm? What if the last person out forgets to turn it on??? etc., etc.

No one likes to keep the doors of churches, temples, mosques or any other place of worship locked but so long as valuables are left in them they'll be the target of thieves. It is indeed a sad testament to our society that it has to happen.



BUDDING BALLERINAS: With tutus arranged just so and in full stage make-up members of the beginner's class of the Acton School of Dance pose in their recital costumes on Saturday at St. Alban's church hall. The ballerinas take to stage for the annual recital on June 6. Back row. Left to right: Emily Schaljo, Casey McKay, Lauren Garrett, Katelyn Ferguson, Kessia Coutu and Emily Hansen. Front: Megan Paul, Emma Sheppard, Justine McIntyre, Erin Gruter, and Kaleigh Nicholl. -Frances Niblock photo

Opinion

Will Joe Who come back?

By **MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY**
The New Tanner

What is there about Canadian politics?

We only seem to attract megalomaniacs or nice guys and gals who don't see what their back room boys and girls are doing.

The thought of Joe Clark returning to Ottawa boggles the mind. He may be a sweet person, but - . For starters, is sweet guy really the image we want to project to the world?

It's easy to see why the media would support him. Those lovely cartoon images of Joe Who with droopy ears, a big, glowing nose and mittens dangling from the end of his coat sleeves are just too much to resist. While Canadians as a whole can tolerate that domestically, I'm not so sure we'd tolerate it internationally again. Last time the media sort of sprung it on us but this time we know what we're apt to face and I'm not so sure we need that sort of world ridicule.

Someone was heard to say Clark would be acceptable because he hadn't been tainted by former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Who pray tell, did the mutiny within the Conservative party draft as Clark's replacement? Am I getting senile or was that not Mulroney?

Mulroney and Ontario Premier Mike Harris have provided quite enough evidence of just how closely the Conservatives can be tied to foreign business interests. After watching these two and their policy makers, thinking voters are apt to hesitate to support a "sweet guy" with a demonstrated inability to control his back benchers, let alone his power moguls.

Of course, given the current representation of federal Conservatives in parliament, Clark couldn't do much harm. I suppose what makes me nervous is the knowledge of how swiftly that could change given the recent vindictive mood of the Canadian voter.

It took a while for Mulroney to rile us, but he succeeded and Chretien's majority was the result. Likewise, David Peterson annoyed Ontario voters and they jumped to Bob Rae. He was just as frustrating so they dumped him in favour of Mike Harris. Now what? Back to the Liberals? If voters are as upset as they sound sometimes, probably.

Chretien seems on fairly solid footing but who knows? Moods swing in 60 campaign days. The thought of good ol' Joe as the alter-

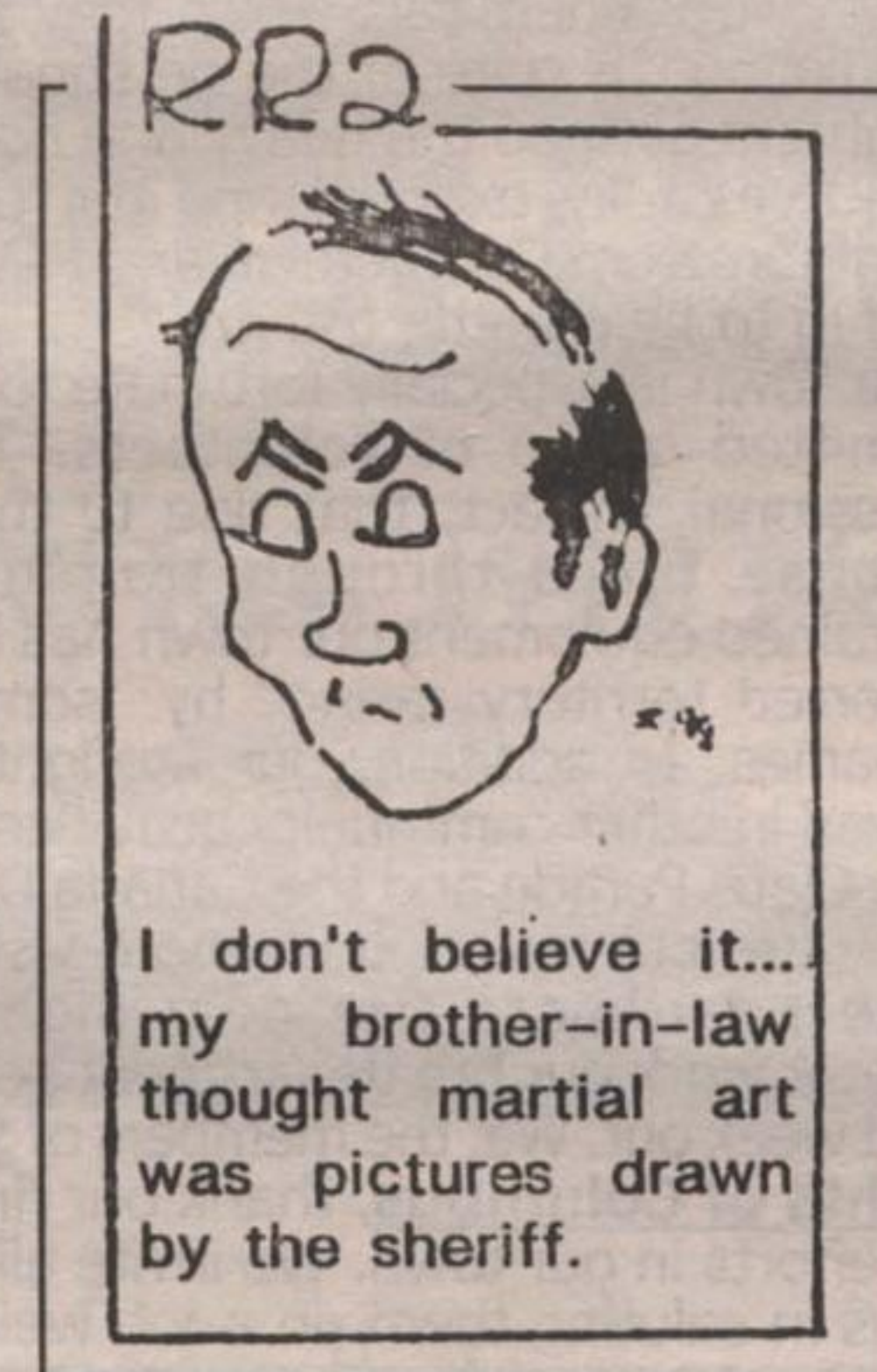
native is a bit scary.

I have always said Canadian democracy is a farce and this choice - or lack of one - for leaders just proves it. We are so proud of the fact anyone can run for political office! We need our heads examined.

We won't even let a labourer pick up garbage for the town works department unless he/she has a Gr. 12 education, yet just anyone can run for office. We don't require our candidates to show any educational standard, any declaration of mental competency, not even a demonstrated commitment to humanity or the nation.

Perhaps this isn't bad for beginners seeking office as a local school trustee or councillor since voters have them handy to reason, cajole or threaten into line when they take positions local residents oppose. But once they hit provincial or federal positions, things change. The gang in the school yard is much larger, tougher, and more devious. Novices need a whole lot more sophistication than many of them possess when they tackle the job at that level.

If you need a specific school diploma and experience before you land even a labourer's job in the working world, our politicians need proper training in history, economics and international relations as well as sociology before they head off into positions of power over us all. Isn't it time we had some sort of educational process available to candidates before they seek nomination? We won't get out of this leaderless situation until we provide that training so people with real morals and ideals have the right background before they enter what we so blithely refer to as the "game of politics."



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