

# EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

## Statistical analysis of criminal offences

Statistics from Halton Regional Police show there was an overall decline in criminal offences in the first six months of this year. That was good news but the down side is that robberies, break and enters, auto thefts and possession of offensive weapon crimes were up. These are offences that really gall most of us.

Robberies, for instance, were up 31 per cent (55, up from 42), break and enters up 7.8 per cent (862, up from 800), auto theft up 24.1 per cent (510, up from 411) and possession of offensive weapons was up to 73 from 68.

It is a widely held belief that criminal activities increase when there is much unemployment, and decrease as people find work. In view of the positive employment picture in Halton and Ontario it should indicate that most crimes should taper off rather than increase. Obviously then either the employment picture is not so rosy or the employment versus crime belief is a myth.

It must not be forgotten that geography also plays a large part in the incidence of crime. The closer a town or region is to a large city like Toronto the more likely its criminal statistics will rise.

Population increase is another factor. Not only does development attract the good. There are always a few bad apples who move in as well, making life more difficult for police.

On the bright side, statistics also show that sex offences were down by 28.4 per cent, domestic assaults were down to 131 from 140 the previous year, domestic assaults down slightly while fraud was down 25.5 per cent and theft was down to 2,316 offences compared to 2,569. These are hopeful figures which indicate personal injury rates are being recognized for what they are - and reported.

What isn't so good is A that property damage vehicle collisions increased by 233 per cent, up to 2,311 from 1,878 showing a lot of us must learn to drive more carefully. However, like most statistics, they can be misleading. Although there were more collisions, injuries sustained were lower by 4.6 per cent. Maybe more of us are wearing seat belts and safety devices in vehicles have improved to cut the toll.

## Briefly...

We'll leave it to you figure out. The Toronto Dominion Bank announced they will be buying Canada Trust for a reported \$8 billion dollars. The merger will mean from 2,900 to 5,000 employees will lose their jobs. They'll be getting generous packages to alleviate the pain, says a T-D Bank spokesman and the level of service for customers will improve. How's that?

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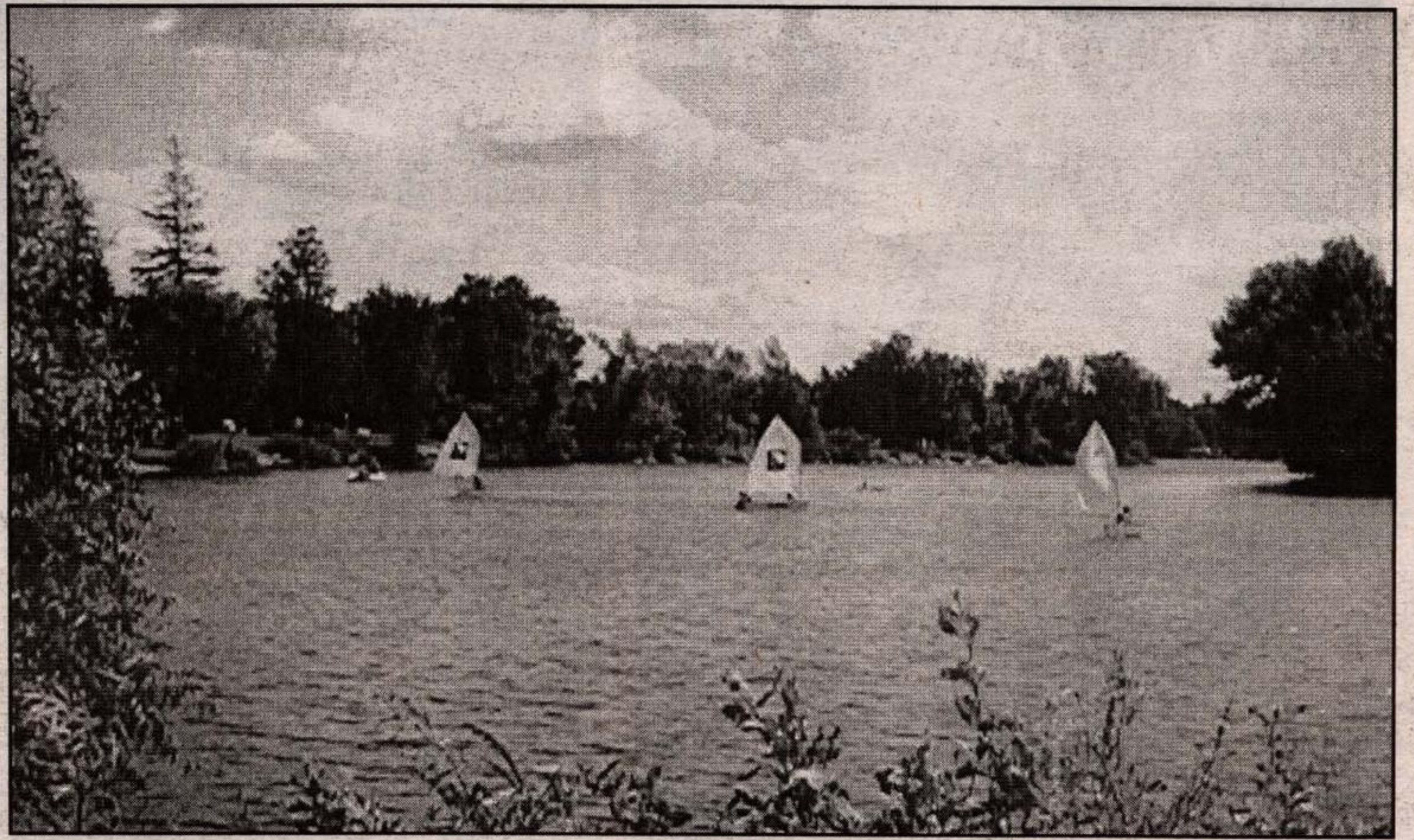
The Town is looking well ahead with the purchase of 98 acres for a sports field for Georgetown. It will allow Halton Hills to develop a tournament facility for soccer and ball which it doesn't have now. Will it also be the home for the mayor's pet project, a leisure centre in Georgetown? It's under consideration, says Mayor Serjeantson, along with some others. We'll bet it ends up there.

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There's lots going on this weekend in Acton. Saturday, the Acton Leathertown Truck and Tractor Pull is at Prospect Park starting at 11 a.m. Sunday it's the Leathertown Festival. Please don't say there's nothing to do in Acton.

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As usual, the worst place in Acton for weeds is along the CN tracks. Since it's a great growing year the weeds are spectacular. Pity, the weed inspector can't get after the railroad. Now CN leases the tracks to RailTex of San Antonio, Texas, maybe they'll cut the weeds.



**SAILING, SAILING** over the bounding main. These kids are being taught to tack, haul up the main brace and other nautical stuff on the blue waters of Fairy Lake Tuesday afternoon under the auspices of the Ontario Sailing Association. They were out again Wednesday painting a colourful scene on the lake.

## Between A Rock and a hard place

By Senator Colin Kenny

Within a month or so, Allan Rock will let us know whether it was all worthwhile.

Worth what? Worth all the work. Worth all the citizen involvement. This year the Canadian public really got mobilized to try to do something about smoking among young Canadians.

Thousands of people put in a lot of time and energy, attending meetings, thinking up ideas, writing personal letters to badger their MPs and cabinet ministers in support of Bill S-13.

One woman I know proudly produced a whole armful of original, hand-written letters. She works hard at her job during the week, but she and her son had given up a whole sunny weekend to pour their thoughts into these letters of support.

S-13 had grassroots support all across the country. This is the way John Ralston Saul says democracy is supposed to work. Saul compares democracy to a sentence, with elections amounting to no more than the punctuation at the end of the sentence. All the rest is citizen participation.

S-13 would have established an independent institution at arm's length from the federal government to counteract the tobacco industry's efforts to get Canadian youth to climb aboard their ever-so-friendly death wagon. The institution would have been financed by a 50 cents-a-carton levy on cigarette sales, which would have raised \$120 million a year.

That's \$120 million that politicians wouldn't be able to siphon from the anti-smoking cause. The federal treasury currently inhales a thousand times as much in tobacco taxes as it spends on anti-smoking measures - a habit of diverting funds that is all too common in government.

S-13 passed the Senate, after the Speaker in the Upper Chamber ruled it procedurally sound. The Speaker

of the Commons, however, didn't see it that way. He killed the bill.

We were all terribly deflated - my staff, who had worked so hard, those tens of thousands of ordinary Canadians, a vast array of health organizations, even myself. I am proud that some of my fellow Senators helped out. Some of them agreed to pool their budgets with me, so we managed to muster about \$200,000 to try to mount an initiative against an ugly statistic: on average, 685 Canadians start the tobacco habit every 24 hours. Many of these kids, of course, are destined to join the even uglier list of 45,000 Canadians who die of tobacco-related diseases every year.

So we invested a lot of time, energy and money on this issue - although the money spent travelling coast-to-coast to hear what Canadians have to say on tobacco addiction was miserly compared to the \$120 million a year Canadian cigarette companies spend on advertising.

Carolyn Bennett stuck her neck out in support of S-13, taking far greater risks as an MP than I was exposed to as a Senator. Both a medical doctor and a mother, she pushed hard for S-13's passage in the Commons - where party whips can be much tougher on independent spir-

its than in the Senate.

Then came the ruling that killed the bill. The government (my government) was obviously pleased, given that Government House Leader Don Bourdria moved the motion that the bill be ruled out on procedural grounds. Any government likes to set its own agenda, and private members' bills are often seen as rogue initiatives.

But Health Minister Rock surprised us. He gave us hope.

During Anti-Smoking Week in early January, the Health Minister announced a series of measures related to smoking - none of them likely to have anything like the impact on youth smoking that S-13 would have. While announcing these measures at the Chateau Laurier Hotel on Jan. 24, he stopped short, looked down at Dr. Bennett and myself and said:

"I want everyone in this room to know that these announcements are not a substitute for getting replacement legislation for Bill S-13, I am establishing a special caucus to help me develop this legislation."

That seemed to suggest that Mr. Rock understood the principles of S-13. He understood that Canadians need an independent institution with enough assured annual funding to fight youth smoking, the way it has been successfully fought in places like California. No more insipid half-measures that produce anti-smoking commercials that kids laugh at.

Instead, a full-tilt assault that would involve communities and young people and provide them with at least a healthy fraction of the funding that goes into tobacco advertising every year.

Now setting up a caucus committee to produce legislation isn't usually how a minister goes about building legislation. In most cases a minister will call in his deputy, and people from the justice department, give them the gist of what he wants, and tell them to draft something. Then he will usually bounce it off the Lib-

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