

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Bigger not better

Bigger is better? Not with schools.

Research has demonstrated that elementary schools work best with 300 to 400 students. And according to a spokesperson for the People for Education, a lobby group, small schools have higher achievement rates, better attendance, lower dropout rates and less bad behaviour.

However, despite the research, Ontario seems to want to close small schools with a lack of funds, the group says. According to a report prepared for People for Education, two-thirds of Ontario's grade schools risk being closed or are forced to share principals, librarians and secretaries because they have fewer than 400 students.

Last year 59 schools closed across Ontario - 97 per cent of them had fewer than 350 students. Some small village and towns lost their schools and students had to ride a bus to larger towns or cities for their education.

People for Education is calling on the Province to save the small schools with a funding system on what research shows is best for the students, not the pocketbooks. Under the new funding formula that's virtually impossible. Smaller elementary schools lack PE teachers, music teachers and librarians because the funds are not there.

Since small schools have higher achievement rates, better attendance, lower dropout rates and less bad behaviour, it makes obvious sense to keep smaller schools open, especially in remote communities. Why does Ontario persist in underfunding when it's pretty obvious they serve children best?

Our moral compass

Political commentators frequently lament that many people have lost their moral compass and are steering their lives in directions that earlier generations would have found obscene.

There may be some truth in their statements but the events of September 11, as tragic as they are, has started some people thinking about the fragile nature of life, when maniacal forces wrapped up in the cloak of religion commit atrocities.

It has made us face up to the fact that there is evil in the world and one needs a moral compass to combat it.

It is often said that evil will flourish if good people do nothing. Tragic events such as the New York tragedy bringing out the best in humans showing we sometimes do require a shaking up to bring out the best in us.



REMEMBER WHEN: Acton Reeve Fred McCutcheon rolled the first ball down the new Acton Bowling Alleys on December 3, 1947. The alleys were built and operated by Ed Jennings who ran a garage in the building and were soon operating with several leagues. - Submitted photo



STUDENTS HONOUR VETERANS: Acton Legion Poppy Campaign chairman Frank Spielvogel leads a Col Party into the gym at McKenzie-Smith Bennett school on Friday for a Remembrance Day service. - Fran Niblock photo

Guest column

Vivid memories of Kristallnacht

By JACK GRANEK

Every year since 1938 I have a sense of unease about the month of November and it stays for a week or so. It is my memory of Kristallnacht, and it was not actually crystal that night, but shards of glass in the streets of cities and villages across Germany.

Named by a cabinet minister in an ironic mood, it was Hitler's retaliation upon all Jews across Germany after a young Jewish refugee named Herschel Grynspan shot German diplomat Ernst vom Rath. When vom Rath died a few days later, Gestapo chief Reinhard Heydrich's orders spelled out the procedures for the "spontaneous expressions of grief:"

1. German life and property must be fully protected when synagogues are set on fire or dynamited.

2. Foreign nationals, even when Jewish, must not be harassed.

3. As many Jews - especially the well-to-do - must be arrested as can be accommodated in jail cells, until they are sent to concentration camps.

By the following morning, 30,000 Jews were already in jails or concentration camps and approximately 250 synagogues across that beautiful land had been set afire.

Among other new punishing regulations were those that only demented bureaucrats could dream

up: Jews were banned from owning carrier pigeons; their driver's licences were suspended; owning radios was not legal anymore, nor was owning firearms. A curfew kept all Jews off the street from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

As well, any insurance that covered broken windows had to be written over to the state. And one billion Reichsmark (approximately \$250 million) was levied against the German Jewish community (it seemed like an afterthought at that time).

The Nazis had previously instituted the concept of Sippenhaft (arrests of kin) under which opponents' relatives, though they were not personally involved, could be punished.

Despite the ominous radio reports of vom Rath's death that Wednesday evening, I had fallen into a deep sleep and woke up a few hours later to the sounds of our front door being broken down and of all windows of our second story apartment being smashed.

Even today, I can still see the intruders hitting my mother, still remember being kicked down a flight of stairs, still hear the unending, jarring sound of breaking glass.

Outside, past blinding searchlights, encouraged by a shouting and jeering crowd that had materialized in front of our building, I found myself being led to a car

standing by and driven to Gestapo headquarters in our city Magdeburg, in central Germany. Inside, SS men in civilian clothes tried to bring a sort of order into demands that faced them: list names, addresses and other details of hundreds, before piling detainees into trucks bound for concentration camps, all before morning. Luck was with me that night. "Send him home, he is Polish," said one of the Gestapo leaders, in the milling crowd of those ordered to line up. He had recognized me as one of the people he had arrested for deportation to Poland two weeks earlier.

He did not know, and I did not volunteer, that Warsaw had in the meantime cancelled my precious Polish citizenship.

I was quickly pushed into the street and made my way home in the cool silent night. No more windows were being broken. Sweeping the huge litter of glass would not begin until daylight.

The same day came a telephone call from the Gestapo for my mother and me to come to their office. I and my dad had been arrested by the two weeks earlier for deportation to Poland and I was let go.

At Gestapo headquarters, a you

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