

EDITORIAL

with Hartley Coles

Hydro sale stinks

Ontario consumers are being told their publicly owned power system is for sale even though it looked after our needs for almost 100 years, producing reliable affordable electricity. In trade we get a system that has many risks, especially of much higher prices, for the government's faith in a free market system that has proved to be a disaster in other states and provinces.

A confidential government document of last year noted that there was a risk of power rates skyrocketing in the free market opening and suggested the government should be ready with subsidies to consumers in the short term. Long term? They could go higher when the government removes a rebate scheme as generating capacity is sold off.

It really galls consumers to think that a few people in high positions can sell off a system that has enabled consumers to pay the same as their neighbours for power in exchange for one in which everyone could be paying a different rate for the same electricity, according to which contract they may or may not have signed.

The unkindest cut is that a court has ruled the government has not the power to sell off Hydro One. Instead of accepting that dictum Queen's Park decided it would change the law and proceed. Obviously the government has many promises to keep to those who would like to profit from the sale of power.

The deal stinks.

Bagging yard waste

Halton Region is phasing out the collection of plastic yard waste bags as part of the yard waste collection and composting program and it is causing some concern.

The Region says plastic bags are costly to process and costly to the environment. They contaminate the compost and take up 'precious space' in the landfill, the Region contends.

Residents will be asked to consider alternatives to plastic yard waste bags including: biodegradable paper yard waste bags, composting and open reusable containers such as bushel baskets or open garbage cans.

Nothing wrong with that if you have only a couple of small trees on your property. However, if you have two huge poplars, a large maple and birches as well as several evergreens on your premises (like this writer) then you can imagine the number of paper bags, open containers or composting space it will take to cart away the leaves in the fall.

Last year this writer put out over 30 large plastic bags of leaves for collection, as well as several bags of other yard waste. If we switch to the smaller biodegradable paper bags which hold about half of the mulched leaves you can cram into the plastic bags, that means about 60 bags of leaves will go out for collection instead of 30. Since the paper bags cost more to begin with it's doubled the cost.

At one time collectors slit the plastic bags and emptied them, leaving the plastic for residents to put in with the regular garbage. Perhaps it was too time consuming slitting the bags. That was discontinued and the entire bag and contents went into the trucks.

Solution for the dilemma: in heavy leaf fall time, say for two pick-ups, allow residents to use plastic bags again and slit them so they don't foul the compost heap.

The move away from plastic has started on a voluntary basis but will become mandatory in September.

American bomb hits Canadian soldiers

Report: 4 dead, 8 injured in incident

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON | An American fighter jet accidentally dropped at least one laser-guided bomb on Canadian forces in Afghanistan Wednesday night, causing some casualties, the U.S. military said.

The Canadian Press reported that four Canadian soldiers were killed and eight injured.

The U.S. Central Command

U.S. troops shot at on busy Afghan road

By CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
The Associated Press

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan | A gunman opened fire Wednesday on a group of U.S. troops shopping on a busy street in this former Taliban stronghold, wounding one American and one Afghan before escaping, the U.S. military and witnesses said.

Afghan officials blamed the shooting on Taliban or Al Qaeda fugitives and said they feared more attacks. The shooting occurred one day before Afghanistan's former king, Mohammad Zaher Shah, was expected to return to the capital, Kabul, after 29 years exiled in Rome.

Gunman wounds two during assault

Witnesses said the Americans, who were wearing civilian clothes, were at a gun shop when the shots were fired. The Americans thought a firecracker had exploded until they noticed one of their group was bleeding, said Maj. Ralph Mills, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Fla.

The wounded American, whose name was not released, walked to his vehicle unassisted, witnesses said. He was taken to the U.S. military hospital at Kandahar airport, where he was reported in stable

condition.

The gun shop owner, who gave his name only as Daood, said one Afghan also was wounded. Another gunsmith, Mohammed Saleem, said the Americans left the scene quickly after the attack. He praised them for not opening fire on a street filled with children who had just left school for the day.

"If they had been Russians, maybe they would have started shooting," Saleem said. "We were surprised that the Americans were armed but didn't shoot."

Afghan troops cordoned off the area and searched for the assailant. They also warned shopkeepers to be vigilant.

U.S. media coverage of 'friendly fire' is ho-hum

The Canadian novelist Alistair MacLeod in his prize-winning novel, 'No Great Mischiefs', about life in Cape Breton with its large Scottish population, recounts how General James Wolfe in his first attempt to take Quebec had this to say, in a letter, about the Scottish Highlanders he used as shock troops against the French defenders: "They are hardy, intrepid, accustomed to a rough country, and no great mischief if they fall."

Wolfe, whom we revere as the general who made Canada British with his victory on the Plains of Abraham, had good reason for his assessment of the Highlanders. Thirty years before he had faced the enemy Scots at the battle of Culloden, which decimated the clans. It was ironic he now depended on them to take Quebec for him but felt it was "no great mischief" if they were killed.

Recently, when a US bomb killed four Canadian soldiers and wounded eight others, I was in the United States. I know now just how the Scots must have felt, especially after the treatment the episode received in the US media. Most newspapers buried the story inside the paper much like the Sun News in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where my wife and I were on a short vacation, a clipping of which appears above.

You'll not the story of the

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bombing is on page four in a single column head with a sub-head underneath. The fact US troops were shot at in Afghanistan by a gunman and two were wounded deserved a three column head in 48 point bold type, illustrating exactly where their priorities were. They seemed unable to grasp the fact that it was their 'friendly fire' which had killed and maimed. Maybe because it does not seem unusual for the military to do the same thing with their own troops.

This scribbler has never liked the idea of Canadian troops serving under 'foreign' command even in a nation so close and neighbourly as the US. The Canucks were used as cannon fodder under British command in WWI and it took a Vimy Ridge for the country to realize we were much better soldiering under our own commanders and making our own 'mistakes.'

That's enough. The subject has been done to death and I've just

added another dimension to a tragic episode in a 'war' which is not like any war Canadians have been involved in before.

Perhaps the one good thing that has come out of all this is that Canadians are demanding that our military should be much better served by the politicians than they have in the past, better equipped, better treated and appreciated.

Received an e-mail from former Acton sports editor and resident Denis Gibbons saying he had enjoyed a recent column in The New Tanner and noting he had worked for NBC at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City for three weeks.

"Saw at least part of more than 50 hockey games - hardest I've ever worked in five Olympics," Denis says. He's been behind the scenes at the US network's hockey coverage providing the background of players from Europe especially those who speak no or little English.

Denis always had a penchant for languages and attended classes at McMaster in Hamilton to learn Russian and other Slavic dialogues, a perfect fit for NBC with his knowledge of sports. Denis also works at The Hockey News in Toronto and produces and edits a newsletter about international hockey.



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Distributed to every home
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