

THE HALTON HILLS **WEEKEND**

**KEN NUGENT**  
Publisher

The Halton Hills Weekend is published every Sunday by The Georgetown Independent/Acton Free Press, at 211 Armstrong Ave. Georgetown Ont., L7G 4X5. It is one of the newspapers published by Metroland Printing, Publishing & Distributing Ltd., which includes: Ajax/Pickering News Advertiser, Barrie Advance, Brampton Guardian, Burlington Post, City Parent, Collingwood/Wasaga Connection, Etobicoke Guardian, Kingston This Week, Lindsay This Week, Markham Economist & Sun, Midland/Penetanguishene Mirror, Milton Canadian Champion, Mississauga News, Newmarket/Aurora Era-Banner, Northumberland News, North York Mirror, Oakville Beaver, Orillia Today, Oshawa/Whitby/Clarington This Week, Peterborough This Week, Richmond Hill/Thornhill/Vaughan Liberal, Scarborough Mirror, Stouffville/Uxbridge Tribune, Today's Seniors.

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Price: Store copies 50¢ each; Subscriptions \$26.00 per year by carrier; \$92.50 per year by mail in Canada; \$130.00 per year in all other countries. Plus G.S.T.

Second Class Mail Registration Number 6869. The Georgetown Independent is a member of The Canadian Community Newspaper Association and The Ontario Community Newspaper Association.

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# Muzzling democracy

The Liberal government's "spanking" of Warren Allmand this week did not garner major headlines but it is something that Canadians should be concerned about.

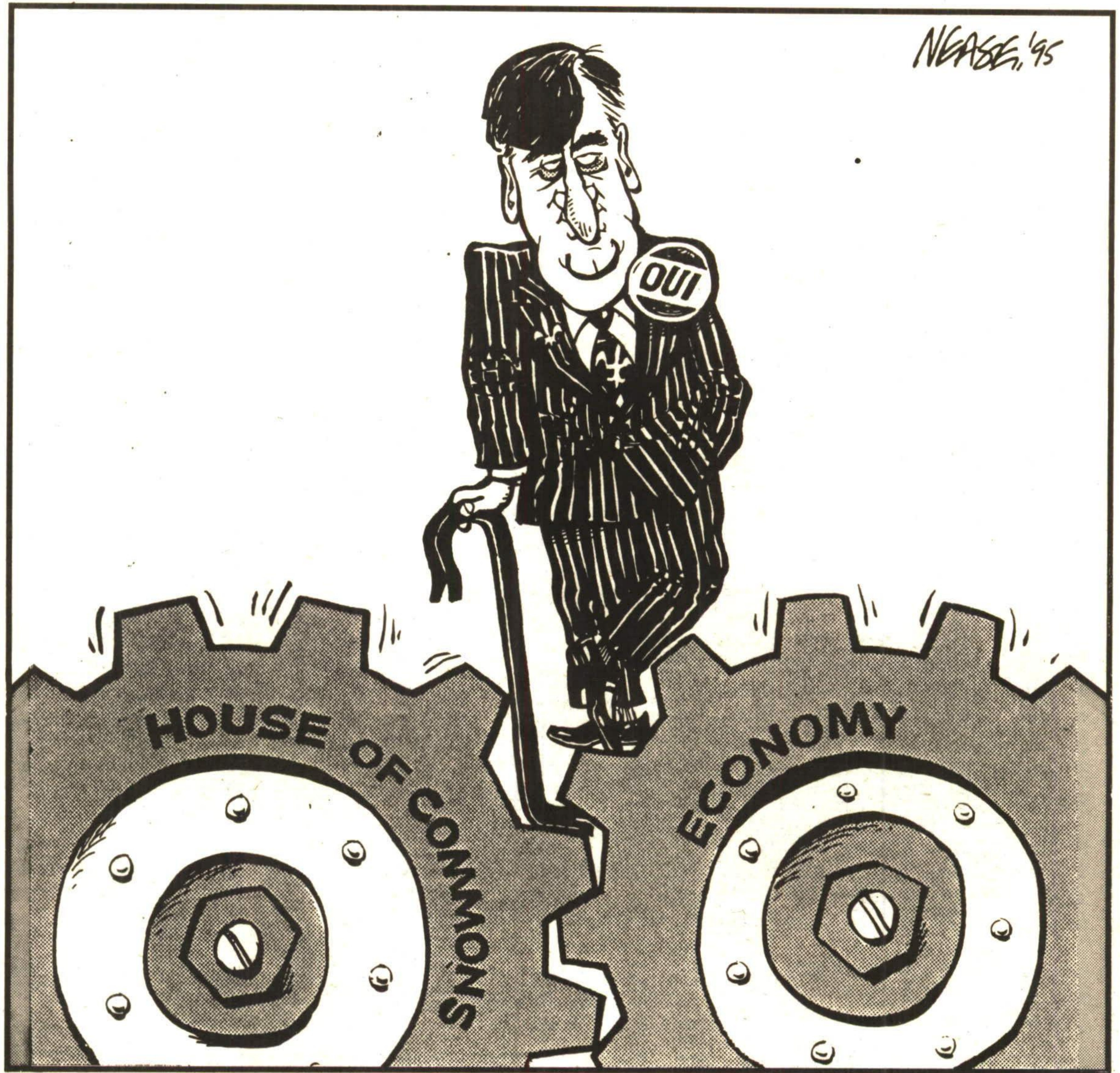
In a democratic society, elections are the cornerstone of that democracy. We elect people with the belief that they will represent us to the best of their ability and will follow the will of the majority of their constituents. It is, after all, how they were elected — through the voice of the majority of the people in their riding.

Two years ago when the Liberals were elected they promised us a more accountable government, one that would listen to the people and one that wouldn't be made up of puppets to the party line.

Sadly, this week we saw the proof that it was just another hollow election promise. A total of 14 Liberals were stripped of their parliamentary committee jobs because they had voted against the government on various bills during the last session.

Politicians who wonder why the public has such a distrust of them need look no further than this for the reason why. By muzzling dissident MPs, the Liberals have, in effect, muzzled the electorate. These demotions will now surely have other MPs thinking twice about bucking the party line.

So much for a new way of doing things. So much for democracy.



## Think I'll fill the gas tank at the first of the week

Well, it finally happened. A Ministry of Transport inspector just changed my life. And he did it through another member of my family.

You see, he gave my eldest daughter a passing mark on her final driving test.

In fact, he gave her a very good passing mark.

Now my life is, well, car-less.

At least on weekends. Last weekend was the first she had access to the car, all by herself, and it was a learning experience for both of us.

It started Friday night. "Dad, can I have the car?" she innocently asked, beaming from ear to ear.

Now I have played this scenario over and over in my mind since she nailed down her 365-day licence less than a year ago. But I must admit, no matter how hard one tries, no sane parent is ready to hand over the keys, without a fight or, at the least, a confrontation.

It's every parent's God-given right.

"What time are you planning on being home?" I queried.

"At 1 a.m., my regular curfew," she replied, a tad defensively.

"Hmmm, don't think that's good enough," I countered, "Gotta be earlier."

"What do you mean? My curfew is 1 a.m.," she continued, "So why, all of a sudden, is it earlier?"

"Oh your curfew hasn't changed," I replied, "But the car has its own curfew, and it's 11 p.m."

"Eleven o'clock! What do you mean? I'm 17 years-old, and shouldn't have to be home

that early!"

I wanted to say the car was only 8 years-old, and requires its sleep, but I resisted the temptation.

"Well there is always the alternative," I replied slowly, as I resurrected the age old parent/teen giant-killer.

"What's that?"

"Well, you could always walk..."

She got the message.

After some quiet and controlled dickerer just shy of hysterics, we negotiated an 11:30 deadline, but to gain those precious extra 30 minutes of driving time, she had to pick

In fact, I didn't have to go for milk, pick up that tube of white glue my youngest daughter 'just HAD to have for a school project,' nor did I have to drive into town to return rented videotapes, (although that trip did take about an hour and 45 minutes.)

There are some advantages to having another licensed driver in the Brown household, although they're few and far between.

But unfortunately, there are two sides to the equation.

The debit side was made abundantly clear to me Monday morning.

I had even been forewarned. And I should have known better, being a teen myself a few years back.

It was the gas tank. The 'empty' gas tank.

Now I know I filled that tank Friday afternoon, and it was full when I parked it in the garage, Friday night.

But Monday morning it was empty.

Dry. Running on fumes.

And, adding insult to injury, the car was in dire need of a wash.

As I pulled up the the pump Monday morning, (to fill 'er up with 56 cent gas) I made a silent vow to fill the car at the first of the week, rather than Friday night.

But it seems this first weekend is a taste of what's to come.

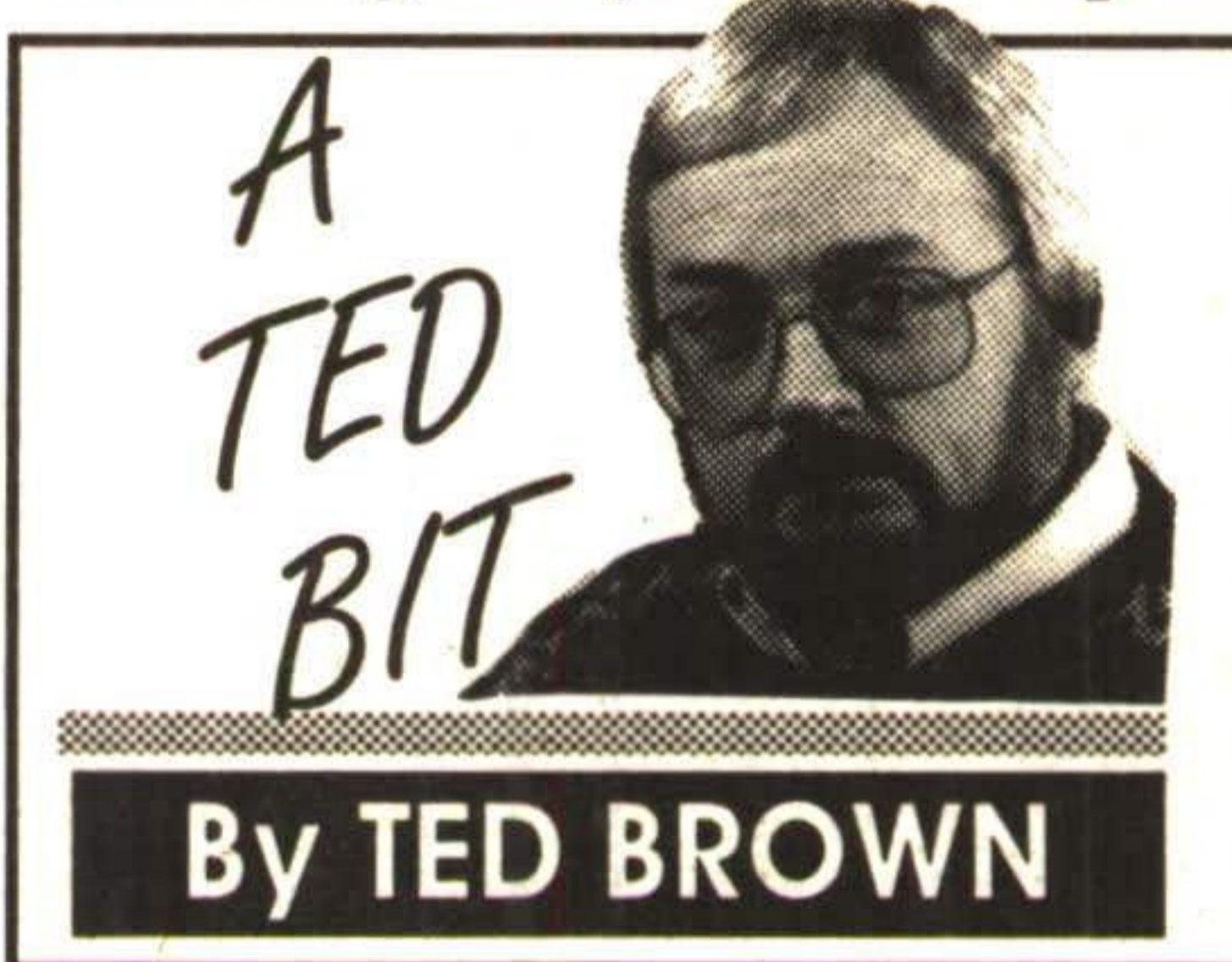
You see, I have four kids.

And right now only daughter number one is driving.

But I'm sure my car problems will double before this week is over.

You see, daughter number two turns 16.

Today.



up her sister from work at 11 p.m.

(I ain't no fool when it comes to making deals with the car.)

Anyway, the car motor didn't cool off for the entire weekend, (except from 11:30 p.m. until the next morning.)

And it managed to attend two hockey games and Acton fall fair Friday night show.

After my first "car-less" weekend, I did make a few observations.

Some positive — some not so positive.

Take Sunday; it was great. I never drove one kid to work all day.

And I never picked one up from work either.

RR2

You can get extra Iron supplement if you eat your spoon with your cornflakes.

### Did you know?

In North America, 40 per cent of 5 to 8-year-old children can be classified as obese. Obesity and overweight conditions in children are associated with decreased levels of physical activity. The average Canadian child watches television for more than 26 hours a week. This is in addition to the 25-30 hours they spend sitting in school. Forty per cent of Canadian children already have at least one risk factor for heart disease — reduced fitness due to an inactive lifestyle.

— Participaction