

Editorial

Testing, testing...

One has to be impressed with the moxy shown by Grade 10 Georgetown District High School students Wednesday as many staged a walk-out to protest the province's Grade 10 literacy test.

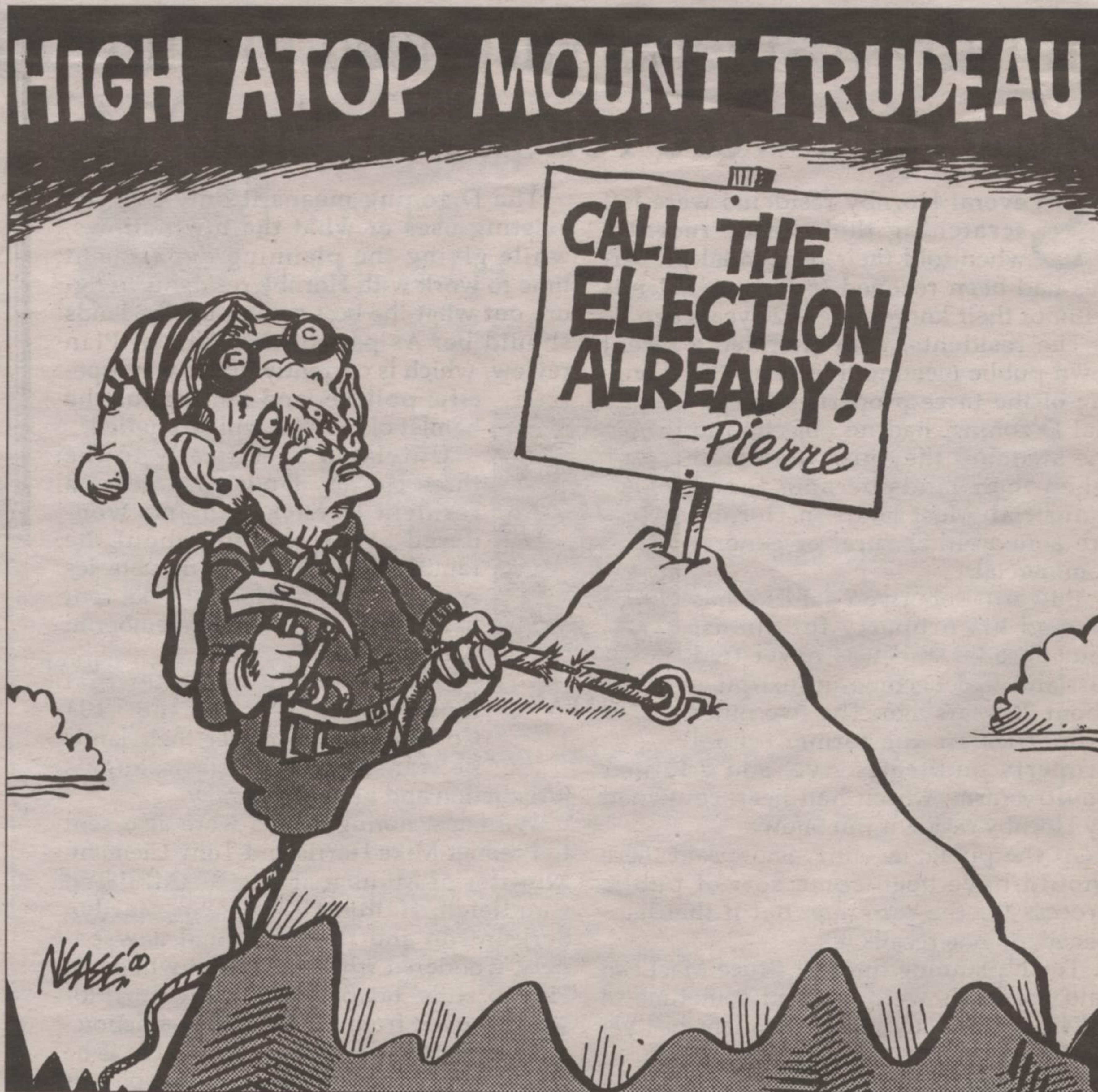
However, while we applaud their spunk, we can't help think the students were misguided in their actions.

What, exactly, is so wrong in taking a test in which the ultimate goal is to ensure these young adults have the necessary reading and writing skills they need for the future? The test is not punitive as it cannot count towards their marks for graduation. It is simply an assessment, much the way those of us in the working world are assessed. Many companies use performance reviews, etc. as a means to improve employee productivity.

Some might suggest the students were prodded into this action by teachers, upset with the Harris government's reform of the education system. However, we'll continue to believe teachers at GDHS are above that sort of petty behaviour, until convinced otherwise.

We have received letters from students about the literacy test and one letter, in particular, was vehemently opposed to the test. However, that letter was filled with mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Which again, leads us to ask: Why are these students opposed to a test that is only designed to make them be the best they can be?



Letters to the editor...

High school students offer opposing views on literacy test

Dear editor,

I am 15 years old and in Grade 10 at Georgetown District High School. Last year my grade was the guinea pigs to the start of the new curriculum. I am writing to express how I feel about our education system.

I am upset because Mike Harris has made our hard-working teachers teach another .5 of a class and that means no extracurriculars because our teachers have to teach up to four classes and have no time. Extracurriculars are very important to a school's reputation. They are what make school fun and it is easier on students to get through the year. I mean, kids who don't have a lot of friends join clubs and teams to get involved and to feel accepted in their schools.

Secondly, I am feeling so frustrated about this freakin' literacy test. We had a massive discussion in my civics class about this and, frankly, we all think it's stupid.

I asked my teacher what it's supposed to prove and she said, "To determine how well students are doing in all Ontario."

We got these packages in class and are supposed to do them for practice. I should tell you that my civics teacher is on the committee for this and I asked her if we could walk out and she said she wasn't going to stop us, but it would be better if our parents wrote a note.

Personally, I think the government should be putting more of their money into the Grade 3 testing. That is when they can make a difference in a child's life, if they have a learning disability, not Grade 10—by then it's way too late.

Also, some of the teachers were telling us that our marks were going to be put in the paper. Excuse me for being blunt, but I don't think so! Our marks are private and should not be published in the paper.

I am standing up for what I believe in. On October 11 and 12, I will only write my name on the test and that's all. The government has wrecked our education system enough. It's time for a change.

Chantel Witter,
Grade 10,
GDHS

Dear editor,

I would like to express my disgust with what is going on in some high school classrooms today. We all know about the reform of the education system: millions have been spent on advertising by both the government and the teachers' union. I can understand that the educators have the right to protest. What I cannot tolerate however, is when they bring their political opinions into the classroom.

For several years now I have been listening to my teachers drop small comments about their opinions on Mike Harris and the new education system. I ignored these, expecting my classmates would do the same. Everyone is entitled to an opinion, right? But now, I have begun to notice how the opinions of a surprising amount of students are in parallel with those of most teachers, which leads me to wonder how influencing their words have been.

For the last six months I have been paying very close attention to the words of teachers on any subject surrounding politics, and I have found that often they insert their opinions into lessons. The effect has been brainwashing. Most students

have an anti-Mike Harris attitude now, but they don't have any argument to back it up. When asked why they hate him, they will reply, "Because he's ruining education." When asked how he's ruining it, they will respond with a careless, "I don't know."

Just the other day a teacher actually gave a speech about how "terrible" the new literacy test is, and how "it is a waste of our time and money." This teacher also added that we, as students, "shouldn't be put through such a dreadful thing". I couldn't believe my ears. A teacher was openly attempting to sway students to her political view, right during class time!

By no means is every teacher like this: on the contrary, most keep their opinions to themselves, as they should. But to those who can't keep their complaining mouths shut, you should realize that students have a mind of their own, and you should stop bringing your opinions on politics into the classroom.

Alex Burns, Grade 10,
GDHS

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