

A fragile illusion

There's an old fable most people remember about the dog carrying a bone across the stream. When the dog saw his reflection and what seemed like a larger bone, he dropped the one he was carrying to get the larger one. The dropped bone splashing in the water shattered the illusion of the larger bone and the dog was left with nothing.

In an age where the consumer is king it is almost heresy to suggest a community could have too many stores or too many services, but realism should have equal time.

Councillor Emmerson McCready made some valid points at Council last week about just how much commercial space there can be in an economically viable community. Because he is also a merchant some are apt to discount his remarks as being overly protective of his own interests.

The reality, however, is that while Milton may one time have been deficient in commercial space, the picture has changed.

As new plazas or neighborhood centres are added there are still only so many dollars to go around.

But the town is growing so fast, you may say. That fast?

The first enthusiastic flush of opening a business may soon turn to a bad dream if there is not sufficient cash flow. The unhappy result can be another business failure with no winners.

The development of commercial space too far in advance of supporting residential growth can be as disastrous for a community as no growth. Empty stores aren't good for landlords or shoppers. They turn away potential renters who take them as a sign of poor opportunities.

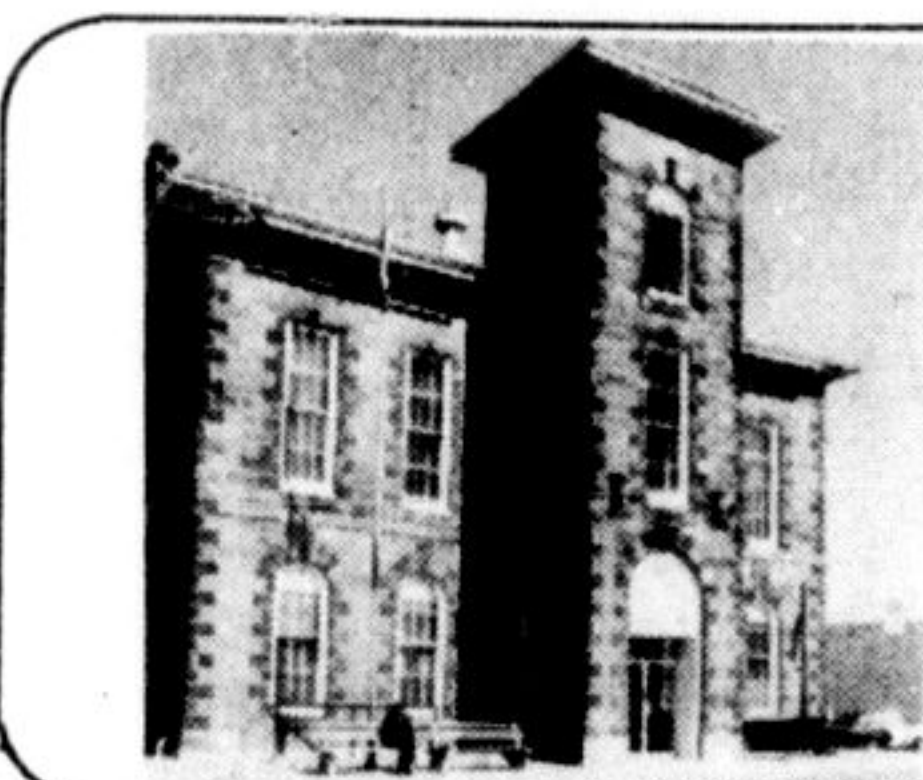
The objective of a town in its desire to be a good shopping centre for residents is to provide good selection and competitive pricing. That is usually more possible where businesses are successful than where they are struggling to pay the rent.

There are several new commercial centres planned or under construction but we have to be careful in our eagerness for more shopping accommodation not to reach for a "bone" that is merely a fragile illusion.



IF YOU WANT TO GET SOMEWHERE fast, don't stand at this bus stop. In fact the only bus that passes this stop may be a Gray Coach or the

Sheridan College student bus. The bus stop is located at the intersection of Trafalgar Rd. and Highway 401.



From the Council Table

By Councillor Brian Penman



Each week The Champion makes space available to members of Milton Council, for unrestricted comment on topics of municipal interest. This week Councillor Brian Penman is the guest columnist.

"ALICE IN DARCYLEND"

"If you are not satisfied with regional government, then get rid of it." The author of this "Alice in Wonderland" statement was none other than Hon. W. Darcy McKeough in a recent address to the delegates attending the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference.

Unfortunately, it was not a moment of rejoicing, for Mr. McKeough was using a play as ancient as the rhetorician's art itself. Nor was it the death knell of regionalism we were hearing, but rather an elaborate set-up enabling Darcy to lead the political multitudes down a garden path lined with regional governments which, by the way, "are here to stay" according to Darcy and "that somehow we are going to make work." (Except of course in Kent County, a riding ably represented by none other than Mr. McKeough himself.)

It was an address filled with platitudes and bureaucratic buzz words. "Cost effectiveness," "a climate for effective debate," "mutual economic functions," "regrouping at regional levels", and best of all "blind budgeting". Difficult to comprehend at the best of times but even more so at 8 a.m. on a Tuesday morning. Citing examples of indiscriminate spending, an increase in costly police commissions and conservation authorities, and a regional incompetence in which, too often, the left hand was not aware of the activities of the right, Darcy grudgingly conceded that "regional government may not be perfect, but this lack of perfection has no reason to consider disbanding regionalism". Alright, Darcy, we'll play your game and for the moment accept this bit of non-logic and quietly bury our community heads in the sand.

Now, what? When we resurface will the exorbitantly costly regional headquarters, with its reselecting pool disappear? In a phenomenon best described as "empire building" could we hope for reduced bureaucratic "red tape" in handling citizen or area municipality requests? Is there a guarantee that regional tax increases in excess of 20 per cent will never happen again? Is there a possibility that the hundreds of thousands of dollars spent by the Region on consultative fees were really worthwhile and not merely an elaborate camouflage for past political decisions made at the committee level? Will we in Milton live to see the day when our regional destiny is not in the hands of a predominantly "urban" voting block from Burlington and Oakville?

Is it possible, that some day the Region will spend less of its energy on becoming the political centroid of Halton and become

more supportive of the unique and individual identities of each of the area municipalities? And finally, is it too much to hope for an end to parochial representation and a reinstatement of the notion of a government concerned with truly "serving" the needs of people?

Certainly, I recognize that the population of Halton has increased since 1970 by some 23 per cent and accompanying such tremendous growth is the need for increased taxation, essential to the provision of the hard and soft services our urban communities have come to expect. But, the bulk of the rural areas remain unchanged and seldom do they experience any direct benefit from such growth. If anything, growth frequently brings an end to farming operations and a reduction in the number of acres being actively cultivated. Accompanying this growth is a costly duplication of services between the Region and the area municipalities and an astronomical growth in regional staffing.

Today, including police, the number of people employed at the Region is just over one thousand and at an annual pay roll of \$13.5 million. For all of this, the Region has yet to demonstrate that what has been created by Bill 151 is conclusively more efficient than the old county system.

The track record of regional governments across the Province has been inconsistent. Representation based on population invariably denies an adequate voting base for the less populated rural areas. Frequently, the large numbers of elected officials and staff who meet at the regional level fail to meld into a cohesive and politically decisive unit. In-fighting, power struggles, and empire-building get in the way of responsible government. Too often, powerful individuals fill the vacuum by setting up power bases from which they manipulate key decisions. On occasion, even the presence of a cabinet minister is felt. To make of regional government, and especially those which are floundering, nothing more than an extension of Queen's Park and party politics is an hypocrisy of the highest order. Sad, but to this observer, certainly, true.

In spite of the Regional Chairman's recent attempts to convince the area councils that the Region is "a partner in local government" there is little doubt that we are on the verge of a very serious power struggle, perhaps one destined to move all power to a single regional tier—a form of government more remote than any system yet experienced by the residents of Halton. Partners, perhaps, but then no one wants to be a junior, let alone "silent" partner.

Let us contemplate several solutions to the above problems. If the Province is sincere in its efforts to decentralize and pass some of its power to the local area, then accept the fact that the area municipalities are closest to the people and most answerable to the electorate. Who

better understands the perplexing issues and problems facing the citizens of a ward than a locally elected official? He need not journey to the Region to exercise his perceptions for they can be performed just as well, if not better, at the level of the local council. Perhaps all is not lost. We may yet save poor Alice and lead her out of "Darcylend", or is it "Morrowland" and into a brighter future by considering each of the following:

a) eliminate the idea that a regional government is a super-government, second only to the Province, and return all logical responsibilities to the local level. This would include planning, water supply, purification and distribution, sewage treatment and sewers, and finally all aspects of waste management. The single exception to the above would be resource recovery which would be a valid regional undertaking but an item which the Region, to date, has been completely inept in pursuing.

b) reduce the number of regional councillors and staff. Certainly, drastic cutbacks in the planning area are in order.

c) terminate the mindless proliferation of regional documents such as the recent The Region of Halton: A Partner in Local Government. Choosing A Partner in Local Government and Agricultural Resource Planning which are costing the taxpayer siphonoric in content.

d) concentrate on the things a region can best accomplish, items such as police, perhaps fire protection, and the acquisition of a balanced industrial base in each of the area municipalities.

e) call for a full enquiry of regional government in Halton, subjecting Bill 151 to its inherent weaknesses and the pressing need for serious revision and modification of regional government. Concerned citizens in both Milton and Acton, as well as other jurisdictions in the Province have pressed for exactly this type of review, and in several instances been thwarted by none other than Mr. McKeough himself.

It is obvious that the magnitude of the problem is considerable. And in spite of Mr. McKeough's simplistic rejection of the prospects of ever disbanding regional government, simply because, it isn't working, the results of Bill 151 are everywhere in evidence. On a daily basis, the groundswell of public dissatisfaction confirms that the dream has gone sour, that regionalism too often demonstrates a tendency for irresponsible rather than responsible government, and that poor Alice may never make it back to Wonderland.

Stop for school buses

This year some school buses in Ontario will sport new safety equipment—flashing, illuminated signs which protrude from the driver's side of the bus, warning motorists to stop to allow children on or off safely.

Extra safety precautions were found necessary after 3,123 drivers were found guilty in 1976 of failing to stop for a standing school bus while its lights were flashing. Just imagine, if you will, over 3,000 accidents or near-accidents on Ontario's highways last year, caused because some motorists forgot to take extra care when

school buses were going their rounds!

The statistics, and the need for the experimental program of side flashers, bother us. The school bus law was introduced to protect the lives of Ontario youngsters each school day. It has been widely publicized, by the government and the media.

Yet we frequently hear of motorists wheeling past stopped school buses, as if they didn't even exist.

Hopefully, the law will sink in soon. For the sake of our children, we hope so.

Can I help?

"Can I Help?"

That sounds so good coming from a friend just when you need a hand. All too often, though, it seems as if we have to ask for help before it is offered. And have you noticed how, when you face a particularly difficult task, everyone you ask to help is suddenly busy? All the excuses come rolling in.

The same situation applies to Traffic Safety, according to the Ontario Safety League. Hundreds are killed and thousands injured in Ontario each year. Many people wonder what can be done to decrease this tragic toll. They ask if they can help in some way. That is, they ask if they haven't already decided to lay the blame on young drivers, drunk drivers, highway construction and any one of a dozen other factors.

While it is true that each of these is cause for concern in the overall traffic picture, the major factor in traffic collisions is the ordinary driver. Something happens when we get behind the wheel. We become totally involved with our rights, our time, our importance, our power.

Road and weather condition a problem? The majority of accidents occur on good, dry roads, during daylight hours and with good weather and clear visibility.

Drunk drivers a problem? Sure they are, but less than 10 per cent of all the drivers involved in accidents in Ontario in 1974 had been drinking.

Lack of vehicle maintenance a problem? In some cases, yes! But over 90 per cent of the vehicles involved in crashes showed no apparent defect.

Pedestrians a problem? Over two thousand pedestrians were obeying the law when hit by vehicles in 1974.

Motorcycles a problem? To many car drivers, yes. Yet research indicates that in some 70 per cent of bike-car crashes, the car driver was at fault.

Well over half the drivers involved in accidents in 1974 were committing some infraction of the traffic code... ignoring signs and signals, speeding, improper turns, tailgating and generally doing anything they thought they could get away with to serve their purpose of the moment.

"Can I help the cause of traffic safety?"

You bet you can! We can use your feet, hands, eyes, ears and knows. We're all in this together. We share the streets and highways—large and small cars, trucks, buses, trailers, motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians. And, it's quite simple, really. Common courtesy and horse sense is all too frequently the missing ingredient in traffic safety.

Obey the traffic laws, signs and signals. Drive defensively. And go that extra mile—give your fellow travellers all the courtesy and respect you expect them to give you.

Commenting briefly

Those flags flying each day at Unity Park by the Chamber of Commerce information centre have heralded a colorful welcome to Milton. The problem is that now, although the good weather is still with us, the flags don't go up because the student staffing at the information centre has ended and

there's no one to take the flags down at night. Needless to say, if they don't get taken down at night they won't soon be stolen. We keep wondering if there isn't some way the flags could be kept flying so it doesn't look like the welcome mat was taken in after Labor Day. Any ideas?



Across the Editor's Desk

By Roy Downs

Would you attempt to operate a multi-million dollar corporation, without a set of rules to guide you? Of course not.

Milton Council shouldn't try operating the town without a set of procedural rules, either. But they've been doing it for three and a half years now, much to the chagrin of some councillors and many staff members.

Oh, they have some rules—unwritten ones—which they often follow. But when someone wants to win a fight, the rules are dropped (or twisted) and anything goes. Most municipalities have their own set of procedural orders, which are followed during all meetings. Milton Council has job descriptions for some of its department heads, but it has no rules for its own conduct.

Council has talked of getting a set of rules drafted, but there are some who are opposed. Of course the opponents are those who enjoy making up the rules as they go along—the councillors who fear a set of rigid rules will stop them in their pursuit of pet projects, or hamper their extended de-

bate on subjects of personal concern.

Councillor Rick Day is the most outspoken opponent to the idea of having rules for council. He claims some people will use the rules against you. Rightly so, and Councillor Day would probably be the most adept at twisting council rules to his own advantage.

Mayor Don Gordon, on the other hand, feels council MUST have rules set down on paper for the guidance of the mayor or any councillor forced to chair a meeting. Lack of a procedural by-law has caused some problems in the past, and will cause more in the future. The mayor can be a strong chairman when he wants to be, but if he were backed up by a set of common-sense rules, his job would be a lot easier.

Last Tuesday's council meeting demonstrated, once again, the need for procedures. A motion to table a subject (the contentious ward boundary debate, no less) was passed by a 6-4 vote. But even before it was voted on, the elected representatives had a hassle, debating whether the motion to table a subject was debatable or not, and

whether it took precedence over the motion on the floor.

Every rule of procedure we have ever seen says a tabling motion cannot be debated, and does supersede any motion on the floor. The clerk told council the same thing.

Anyway, it passed, on a 6-4 vote. But within the hour, the original motion was back on the floor again. Another tabling motion was introduced, but it was defeated this time and the debate continued on the ward boundary issue. In the end, the original motion (which had already been tabled once during the meeting) was approved.

There have been other instances where a procedural by-law would have avoided some ticklish situations for the council and staff. And perhaps saved some embarrassments, too.

The sooner council adopts some common sense rules of procedure, the sooner it can get down to business and conduct the town's affairs in an orderly, business-like fashion. To carry on without one is sheer folly.

Pages of the Past

From Champion Files

One year ago

Taken from the issue of The Canadian Champion, September 15, 1976.

Fred Armstrong Arena was given a reprieve Monday evening by Milton Council when it was learned the cost of winning Milton Memorial Arena would cost \$425,000 instead of \$350,000.

A Safeway Food Store has been proposed for downtown Milton in the area of Millside Dr.

Building permits for work valued at \$1,104,702 were issued from Milton Building Department last month.

The corn roast and street dance planned for September 25 by the Arena Fund Raising Committee has been shelved because of the change of plans made Monday evening by Milton Council.

Construction of Milton's new \$573,000 water reservoir is underway on 14 Sideroad on the side of the Niagara Escarpment—but some area residents aren't too happy about the work to date.

Halton Region's Public Works Committee will try once again to convince regional council that a 500 acre landfill site for the region should be located in the area of Tremaine Rd. and Britannia Rd. in Milton.

Campbellville's new fire hall might have its own fire pumper this year after all. Ontario Jockey Club has offered to loan Milton Fire Department a 20-year-old pumper for \$1 a year to help the hall.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Canadian Champion, Sept. 12, 1957

Milton High School turned out a bumper crop of graduates this year and a telephone survey shows what the grads are planning to do this fall. Six want to be teachers, five civil engineers, four nurses, four secretaries, two chemical engineers, two air force volunteers, a diplomat and a lawyer.

Two venomous rattlesnakes were found last week in wooded areas west of Bronte, where land is being cleared for the erection of two oil refineries.

A total of 1,337 students returned to the classrooms this fall, a new record high enrollment for the town. There are 839 in the three public schools and 175 at Holy Rosary plus 316 at the high school and eight at Sunshine School.

Robert Joseph Addison, eight month old son of Mr. and Mrs. Gerry Addison of Riverplace Cres., placed fourth out of 100 contestants in the CNE baby show for babies under nine months.

Jean Peterson of Hornby has brought the CNE diary queen crown to Halton for the second year in a row. She was crowned by last year's winner, Dolores King of Oakville. Over 40 girls were entered. Jean won a wrist watch, silver tea service and a Holstein calf.

75 years ago

Taken from the issue of The Canadian Champion, Sept. 11, 1902

William P., aged 41, foreman of the clay pit of the Toronto Pressed Brick Co., was in town on Tuesday night. He left for home between 11 and 12 o'clock and walked up the C.P.R. track. Yesterday morning his body was found opposite the Milton Pressed Brick Co.'s works. It was horribly mangled.

It is supposed that he was struck by an eastbound freight train at the opening of the switch beyond the brick works and near a curve, which might account for the unfortunate man not seeing the train. Dr. McColl, coroner, who saw the remains, believes that at least three trains must have passed over them during the night. Nothing else would account for the way in which they were mangled. The coroner ordered an inquest, which opened yesterday evening, and was adjourned for a week. It is hard to understand how the unfortunate man was caught by the train, as a number of people who saw him here shortly before he left for home all agree that he was perfectly sober. Though not a total abstainer, he never allowed himself to be overcome by liquor. No liquor nor broken glass was found near his remains. He was a reliable man and particularly expert in handling dynamite for blasting. He left a widow and seven children, from six weeks to 13 years of age. Appley prohibitionists held a meeting last week to organize for the prohibition referendum.

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