



COMMENT

Old blacksmith shop a local historic gem

If there was ever an example of a grand project to preserve local heritage, it's Waldie's Blacksmith Shop.

As reported elsewhere in this newspaper, the shop, which opened in town in 1867, will be restored thanks to a project spear-headed by the Milton Historical Society.

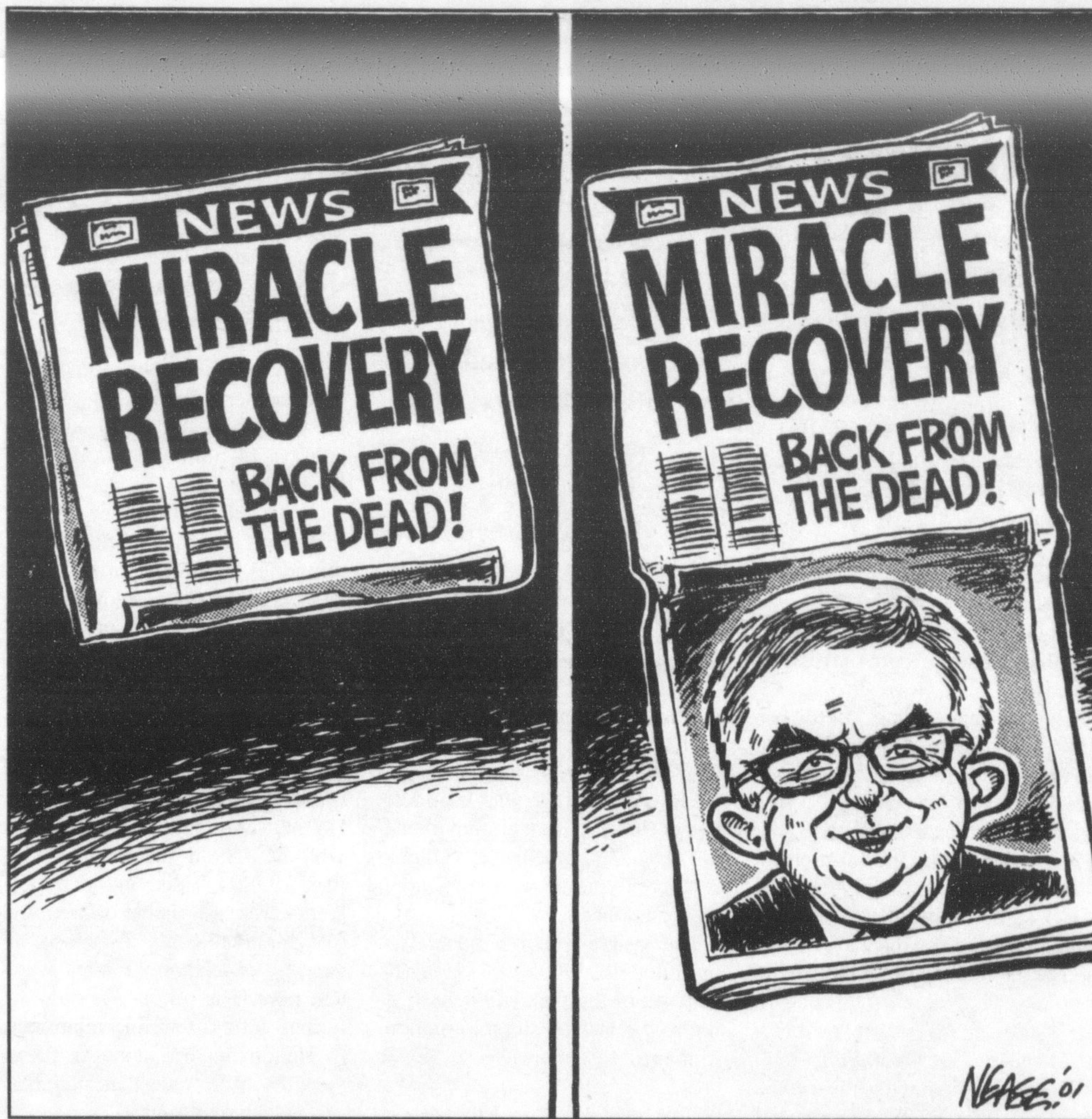
We couldn't agree more with Mandy Sedgwick, chair of the restoration committee, that preserving Milton's heritage is important.

And what a perfect opportunity the blacksmith shop presents to do just that.

Some of the nails in the planks of wood are from 1821 and many of the tools kept over the years would normally be found in a museum setting.

It's a prime representation of days gone by that should be preserved for others to enjoy and learn from.

So let's all get behind the project either by making a donation, volunteering to help out or supporting fundraising events.



OUR READERS WRITE

Let's all hope and pray justice, common sense will prevail in Robert Latimer case

Dear Editor:

Congratulations to Ross Hingston for his letter in The Champion of January 23 concerning Robert Latimer, who took his daughter's life because he couldn't bear to see her continuous suffering.

He was sentenced to life with a minimum of 10 years. If it costs a few hundred dollars to keep a person in jail for one day, it would cost a vast sum to keep a person in jail for 10 years or 3,650 days.

Why waste money from overburdened taxpayers keeping Robert Latimer in jail

when he's no threat to the community, nor to anyone else?

If it's felt that he should be punished, he could be confined to his farm under house arrest.

This punishment would enable him to operate his farm and, in so doing, make his contribution to the economy as well as support his wife and children and himself.

Let us hope and pray that justice and common sense will prevail.

Marjorie Hadley Powys
Mill Street

Latimer's actions fundamentally humane

Dear Editor:

John F. Bedell has provided us with a great example of the kind of erroneous thinking that has made Robert Latimer a criminal. His methods and arguments are worth examining.

Typical of his side, Mr. Bedell chose not to address the facts of Tracy Latimer's condition. Instead he appealed to emotion with a one-sided description of those who disagree with his view. He used the cheap strategy of 'appeal to authority' saying, "people's lives are to be protected under the law," as if the law were something higher than a product of human judgment. Then in another form of appeal to authority he conducted an imaginary poll. His 'poll' concluded that, "Most people would answer 'No'" if asked emotionally loaded, again one-sided, questions concerning the handicapped.

Mr. Bedell's greatest and most manipulative error is a very common one: by not addressing the

facts, he drops the context that makes Robert Latimer's actions fundamentally humane. In complete disregard for reality, he presents Tracy Latimer as having been just like any other handicapped person. She was not! She had a brain, but didn't have the faculty to grasp even her most basic needs. She could smile but couldn't tell what things gave her happiness, even when they occurred frequently. In short, she didn't know she was alive or who she was. She existed, but couldn't live. She had absolutely no potential of reaching any understanding of such things.

All of the forgoing may be enough to permanently institutionalize her or even to euthanize her. But her condition was worse than that. She was in constant, untreatable (under law) pain.

Mr. Bedell reveals the flaw in his argument when his imaginary poll asks, "For people with a developmental disability, is their life worth living?" His answer: "Most people

would communicate, 'Yes.'" Exactly! Most would communicate "Yes," but there really are some who would communicate "No."

Of course, in his haste to drop the facts, Mr. Bedell's fantasy gives even the most severely mentally handicapped people the rationality of a well-educated abstract intelligence. How dare Mr. Bedell and the others presume to speak for her so self-righteously. Tracy Latimer was extraordinarily mentally handicapped, and those who could speak for her have more reason to argue that she would communicate, "No" if she could understand her plight. The brave man who's her father understood the nature of Tracy's existence and acted properly. Robert Latimer and his family are better equipped to speak for Tracy than anyone. They were a lot more humane to Tracy than were those who would add to his, and his family's, suffering by ruining his life.

Richard Bramwell
RR3, Milton



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Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,
Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9

(905) 878-2341

Editorial Fax: 878-4943

Advertising Fax: 876-2364

Classified: 875-3300

Ian Oliver Publisher

Neil Oliver Associate Publisher

Wendy McNab Advertising Manager

Karen Smith Editor

Steve Crozier Circulation Manager

Teri Casas Office Manager

Tim Coles Production Manager

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