



The Canadian Champion

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Ian Oliver — Publisher
Jane Muller — Editor
Nell Oliver — Advertising Manager
Tim Coles — Composing Manager
Dennis Willis — Distribution Manager
Teri M. Casas — Office Manager

Phone 878-2341
 Toronto Line 821-3837

Second class mail Registration No. 0913

EDITORIAL: News: Rob Kelly, Karen Smith, Norman Nelson.
 Sports: Brad Reaume. Photography: John Warren, Jon Blacker.
ADVERTISING: Sales: Debbie Pells, Andrea Downes, Jillian Young, Marc Bertrand, Ted Lindsay. Business: Joy Gilbert.
Classified: Sheena Cameron, Stephanie Allen.
BUSINESS: Shirley Dyc, Belinda Beasley, Linda Norton.
DISTRIBUTION: Karen Huisman.
COMPOSING: Mark Dills, June Colbourne, Karen Mathers, Mike Boyle, Linda Lamont, Kimberley Walsh, Michelle Huisman.

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On turban turmoil

Is it wrong for Sikh's to stand by their deeply held religious convictions? Or should they abandon them under public pressure in order to belong to organizations such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?

The Sikhs should maintain their traditions. And they should be welcomed into the RCMP, turbans and all, as long as they meet the force's admission standards in far more important areas than dress; ability and civic responsibility.

The RCMP is solidly behind admitting Sikh officers who choose to wear their turbans. And other major metropolitan police forces in Canada have already bent their dress requirements in order to accommodate Sikhs. This is as it should be.

Would any of us truly choose to rob a person of his or her religious dignity in order to conform to the dress code of the day? Would we spurn an otherwise worthwhile candidate for a job because his or her appearance, while socially acceptable, is not in keeping with our own?

What are Sikhs flaunting? Are they flaunting the high standards imposed by the RCMP for admission? No. Are they rebelling against the rule of Canadian law? Hardly. By joining the RCMP Sikhs will be sworn to uphold that law.

Detractors argue that allowing Sikhs to wear turbans opens the door for many to lay legitimate claim to similar dress exemptions. Not so. How many people, day in and day out, dress in a discernibly different manner due to their religious convictions? The only people who spring to mind are Orthodox Jews. Perhaps they could lay claim to a similar exemption.

Canada's varied other ethnic groups generally save their traditional garb for ceremonial exhibitions. Those with Scottish ancestry do not ride the GO train in their kilts, for instance. They cherish that symbol, but it is not inextricably woven into their religious beliefs or sense of identity to such an extent they, as a group, feel the need to constantly wear kilts. Sikhs, however, do feel the need to wear turbans.

The Sikh community has much to offer the RCMP and all of us. Its origins lie in the 16th century, with a rejection of idol worship and the caste system in India. Sikhs have fought for their beliefs and maintain a strong martial tradition, a proud tradition.

To put it in a manner with which most Canadians are familiar, these are the type of people you can, generally speaking, trust to go into the corners.

Unfortunately, some don't see it that way. There's a huckster out in Alberta pandering to the fears expressed by many and turning a tidy profit in so doing. He's selling caricatures of a Sikh dressed as a Mountie.

He plays to a strong Canadian fear; the fear of dilution of the national identity, the fear that wave after wave of immigrants will change this country until it is no longer recognizable. Many Canadians have the same fear of cultural dilution due to the much less exotic influence of the Americans.

But the young man on television the other night calmly putting his case for wearing a turban once he joins the RCMP struck us as more Canadian than anything else.

We do not blindly support unlimited immigration. It causes too much tension. And we do not condone abuse of Canada's abundance by immigrants, as is sometimes the case. Further, we deplore the fact that some immigrants choose to cloister among themselves and never truly become Canadians.

But that is not the case with this young would-be RCMP officer, and other Sikhs undoubtedly just like him, who are willing to serve Canada well in many, many capacities.

Looking back



Cameron Deforest, 16, didn't have to go far to land this 22-inch, 4 pound pike back in May 1965. He pulled the fish out of the mill pond and returned the next day to catch another that was almost as big.

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the March 22, 1989 issue

□ Milton's senior planner has come out strongly against a Lac Minerals proposal to expand their quarry operations atop the Niagara Escarpment, setting the stage for what promises to be a heated confrontation next week. Town planning director Bob Zsadanyi's report to council warned that if Milton Limestone (a division of Lac Minerals) was permitted to mine more land in the area the company could destroy the delicate water supply that feeds area homes and farms.

□ In an appearance before Milton council Halton regional chairman Peter Pomeroy said he will fight any plans to expand the newly chosen Milton landfill site. "My position is that we are not about to go one ounce beyond the approved limit (for the dump)" Mr. Pomeroy said. Surrounded by regions which do not have approved landfill sites, Halton could well face serious pressure, particularly from Metropolitan Toronto, for landfill use.

□ Last week a Milton family experienced its second

brush with rabies in less than a year. In December, four-year-old Dana Van Overbake began a series of seven injections after she was bitten by what could have been a rabid animal in her yard. The animal was not captured and the little girl is not sure if the animal that bit her was a raccoon or a skunk. Last Tuesday afternoon a rabid skunk was spotted in the family's backyard. The police were called and the Oakville Humane Society arrived later to pick up the animal.

20 Years Ago

From the March 25, 1970 issue

□ Five hundred students at Ontario School for the Deaf in Milton this week have joined the growing protest against the rumoured jetport locating in Esqueving Township. The deaf and hard of hearing students certainly don't want any jetports in this area — the noise of the jumbo jets would be picked up and amplified many times by the high powered amplification equipment in every classroom.

□ Construction of a \$364,392 36-unit senior citizen building was recommended to Milton Council by the Ontario Housing Corporation. The proposal by Wimpey was one of three received in response to a call for tenders.

□ Despite heated arguments from over 150 area landowners, Oakville Planning Board has voted a firm "yes" for the application to rezone 200 acres of land at Omagh for airport use. The vote of five in favor and three against stood pat as Grant Davidson's proposed airport gained ground.

50 Years Ago

From the March 21, 1940 issue

□ The first sign of spring is here - the boys are playing marbles.

□ There has been a heavy increase in the number of marriages since the declaration of war, but the divorce toll has also been quite big.

□ L.J. Maude, mason, has returned home from Orangeville, where he has been repairing the Grand Central Hotel since last August.

Pud

by Steve Nease

