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Leave well enough alone

Once again the issue of representation has come up at Halton Regional Council. And once again one of the major concerns is accountability of the regional chairman, at least from the point of view of the voters.

Should the regional chairman be elected at large? "No," at least not now.

Currently Regional Chairman Peter Pomeroy is elected by what amounts to a board of directors, in this case the regional councillors of Burlington, Milton, Oakville and Halton Hills. He is, if you will, the president of the corporation of Halton Region, carefully watched over by his board:

As such Mr. Pomeroy, and the staff at Halton Region, are held accountable at the whim of any one such councillor. Mr. Pomeroy merely enjoys more freedom of response, at council and committee meetings, than staff members because his position is on an equal footing with any of the councillors.

But Mr. Pomeroy is nowhere near omnipotent at Halton Region — indeed far from it. He operates within strict guidelines and is very much responsible to political representatives from around Halton.

To us that waters down any really serious concerns about how he is elected. The mechanisms exist to curb any potential abuses by the regional chairman, and Mr. Pomeroy, whom we view as more than adept in his work, is not seriously perceived to be an individual who would abuse the public trust anyway.

However, the overall question of accountability of Halton's chairman, we feel, is indicative of a more telling concern about the position. And that concern revolves around what will happen when Mr. Pomeroy chooses to quit the scene.

In Mr. Pomeroy we have a man tempered by both political experience (he was mayor of Halton Hills) and political setback (in a failed provincial election bid). He has honed his political and communication skills and combined them effectively with an understanding of the workings of government.

But we believe that what truly haunts those who call for a region-wide election for Mr. Pomeroy's post is this question: Who else will offer the credentials we need when the time comes? And how can we afford to place that much trust in an untried individual?

Because there are only two choices for the regional chairman's job: get someone who has political experience but is temporarily out of work (somewhat similar to the Pomeroy situation several years ago) or get someone with no real political experience who looks as if they might make a go of it.

The first proposition is unlikely to happen again, at least as successfully as it did in the Pomeroy case. The second is dicey, and we believe it's what bothers most councillors deep down inside. That's why they push for an election for regional chairman. So the candidate will have earned the position fair and square. And so they can't be blamed if that candidate doesn't turn out well.

The problem with holding an election for regional chairman is that very few municipal politicians can afford mounting a Halton-wide election campaign.

The only two ways to finance such an expensive campaign seem to be to break it up on political lines and have the big three parties finance the extravaganza, so the regional chairman becomes automatically and deeply allied with one party or another.

Or regional council can leave well enough alone for the moment and wait until Mr. Pomeroy at least says he doesn't want to work there anymore. Then they can face the problem anew. Until then, let's leave well enough alone, because it's rare that such a circumstance prevails in politics.

Pud



by Steve Nease

Looking back



These regular Damon Runyon "mugs" were featured in two performances of Agatha Christie's famous *Mousetrapp* by Milton District High School's drama club in April, 1964. Murder and spine-tingling suspense highlighted the production, directed by Anne MacArthur. The "hoods" with topcoats and hats are from left: Ron Berube; Grant Schuyler; John Switzer; John MacArthur; and Tony Weykamp.

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the April 5, 1989 issue

Unionized members of the Milton-Fire Department inked their first contract with the town. The agreement, which was roundly praised by negotiators on both sides, calls for a 14-per-cent raise over two years. However, the net financial effect felt by the town is cushioned somewhat in that the actual cost to taxpayers is just less than six per cent per annum because the raises are staggered.

The town of Milton has come out against the beginnings of a garbage disposal strategy orchestrated by the five regional chairmen of Toronto and the surrounding municipalities. The chairmen of Halton, York, Peel, Durham, and Metro Toronto have outlined a "Solid Waste Program" for the Greater Toronto Area, working with the province and municipalities to reduce garbage by 50 per cent by the year 2000.

Out of the ashes of Three Caesars comes... Fat Freddy. Or more properly, Fat Freddy's. That's the name of the new operation scheduled to open in late April on the

site of what was previously and expensively appointed but ultimately unsuccessful restaurant-night club known as Three Caesars. At a municipal council meeting new owner Andre St John appeared as a deputation to request town support in his application for a patio bar.

20 Years Ago

From the April 8, 1970 issue

"Free Parking" may continue to encourage shoppers to patronize Milton stores, despite the fact that parking meters may begin appearing on downtown streets. Meters which dispense a token, redeemable for cash at the stores of local merchants were suggested to members of Milton Council and the town's three man parking authority last evening.

To the obvious delight of about 200 Omagh area residents, Oakville Council rejected a recommendation from the Oakville Planning Board suggesting that they approve plans for an airport in the Omagh area. Council voted 6-3 to reject the application with only Mayor McLean Anderson, Deputy Reeve William Gillies and councillor Bill Reaume, all members of the planning board, supporting the recommendation to approve the plans.

A 14-lot subdivision on a 78-acre parcel south of the Given Road and east of the Guelph Line and a 24 lot subdivision at Campbellville drew major attention at the Nassagaweya Planning Board last week as developers reviewed plans for the areas. It was suggested the sites would attract homes in the range of \$40,000 and up since the township required a minimum 2,000 square foot home.

50 Years Ago

From the April 4, 1940 issue

Robert Wallace had the misfortune of having the end of his thumb being cut off while operating a circular saw.
 Easter set two records which few living people will see equalled, it was the earliest and the coldest.
 With the election over, the current matter for discussion is the amount of snow in the county, and what effect it will have on the streams.