



The Canadian Champion

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

Phone 878-2341
 Toronto Line 821-3837



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

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We need reform

Is Canada a stronger nation today than it was last week, prior to the uneasy truce-deal surrounding the Meech Lake Accord?

Perhaps so, in that the deal is not as near collapse as it appeared at some points during marathon secret bargaining in Ottawa. So the country has averted one crisis. But more loom.

It is questionable at best whether Newfoundland will pass the Accord, although the chances of that grew when that province's Premier Clyde Wells announced there will be a free vote in his Legislature rather than a province-wide referendum.

The deal is said to be at least more acceptable among elected representatives than Newfoundland's voters. That Legislature, after all, faces the sobering prospect of shattering the fragile Accord by snubbing it. The same possibility served to bend Mr. Wells' iron will somewhat in Ottawa.

Should Newfoundland support the Accord, it will be justly regarded as nation building. But in Canada, nation building is an exercise in frustration given two factors, the environment in which the task is undertaken and the tools at hand.

First, the environment. A solid core of separatists, whose fortunes ebb and flow marginally from year to year but not appreciably, hover ready to cloud and weigh the judgement of any Premier from Quebec, regardless of political stripe.

Also, a consortium of opponents to what is perceived as preferential treatment for Quebec can be cobbled up quicker than a pickup baseball game at a company picnic. The names of the provinces opposing "distinct society" treatment for Lower Canada will change as the faces of their Premiers change, but they will be heard.

As to the tools, it is beyond idealism and even naïvete to contend that the Constitution can be constructed, amended and supported only through the consensus of all affected provinces. Even in a smaller and more centralized society, such as the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, such a struggle is not contemplated.

Yet it prevails in Canada, a country of disparate, (desperate?) regional interests spanning six time zones — a country where it is midnight at first light on the opposite border, a country large enough to freeze in glacial permafrost at one tip while another basks in balmy spring breezes.

Premier Wells undoubtedly acts in what he feels are the best interests of the nation in his constitutional concerns. And his positions can be more than adequately defended in a legal forum.

But who among us has not sacrificed some small principal for a greater good? Who among us would not accept compromise in the face of a gamble carrying unknown and potentially catastrophic consequences?

Mr. Wells personifies Meech opposition — and has been allowed to dilute, delay and potentially damage the national agenda — some would say beyond repair. His constituency is too small to wield such power.

The federal government, which will undoubtedly bask in the afterglow of its supposed achievement if the Meech Lake Accord passes, is the only body in Canada that can rectify this sorry state of affairs.

Ottawa must move to change the rules of the game so that majority provincial support is all that's needed for Constitutional reform. And this government should do it. The Progressive Conservatives have the numbers to do as they will in the House of Commons. They should do as the people will, and safeguard the nation from brinkmanship such as we saw last week.

Looking back



If this were 1969 the pool at Rotary Park would be open this weekend. We'll have to wait just one more week unlike this happy crowd of about 260 swimmers 21 years ago who took the first plunge mid-month. The outdoor pool will be open from June 23 to September 3.

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the June 14, 1989 issue

Smoking lit a fire under Bruce Attenborough at Milton council's general committee meeting. The cigar puffing Ward 3 councillor said a new bylaw curbing smoking in Milton, expected by September, will put a damper on some of the town's small businesses. If adopted, the new bylaw will sharply curtail smoking almost anywhere people gather in Milton; theatres, reception areas, elevators and restaurants.

Vehicles will magically disappear from Main Street, merchandize will magically appear on sidewalks and the sound of music will fill the air. This is not an illusion it's the annual downtown Moonlight Magic event sponsored by the Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA). The downtown core will become a pedestrian mall from 7-11 p.m. Moonlight Magic will have a multicultural flavour with several ethnic food booths, and although the main attraction is the sidewalk sale, there will be plenty of entertainment.

Some enterprising 15-year-olds can breathe a sigh of relief now. Their summer careers selling ice cream seem assured. Those 15-year-olds could perhaps be excused

for painting councillor Rick Day as the grinch who stole Christmas in July. But Mr. Day's efforts to stop them from selling for Dickie Dee were due mostly to safety concerns, not humbug. "To me, 16 should be the minimum," the councillor said. "A 16-year-old has a driver's licence and knows the rules of the road."

20 Years Ago

From the June 17, 1970 issue

A 14-unit low rental housing project, to be erected and operated by the Ontario Housing Corporation in Milton, was endorsed by Milton Council in a 5-3 vote at the council's last meeting. An OHC survey of the need for this type of geared-to-income project was made last year and OHC representatives said Milton could support a 14-unit project. The project would be geared to the incomes of the occupants, roughly 25 per cent of their monthly income.

Halton County elementary school teachers will receive a wage increase of 9.4 per cent trustee Liberty Pease told the Halton Board of Education at the regular Board meeting in Oakville. The hikes will see teachers earning from \$5,500 for a beginning teacher, to \$14,900 for a teacher at the highest level with 15 years of experience. The average wage increase is \$700 to \$800 with the maximum raise being \$1,200.

An application to rezone 150 acres of land on Guelph Line north of Campbellville to allow its use as a quarry was postponed indefinitely at a brief Ontario Municipal Board hearing at Brookville. The OMB accepted bids by representatives of the township and owners of the nearby Mohawk Raceway, to have the hearing stalled until the provincial government adopts proposed changes to regulations regulating quarry sites.

50 Years Ago

From the June 13, 1940 issue

Milton is solidly behind Canada's war effort—and against the Germans and Italians, our enemies.

There is every evidence that mosquitoes will be plentiful this year. They were in evidence early too.

Today, Thursday June 13, is King George VI's birthday.

Pud

by Steve Nease

