

COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,
Milton L9T 4N9
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Classified Advertising: 875-3300

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LOOKING BACK



This scene from Milton Fall Fair circa 1963 is sure to be repeated at the event that comes up for its 139th edition September 25 to 27.

Free speech for all

Does denying the contention that as many as six million Jews were killed by the Nazis during the Second World War constitute hate literature?

Is it illegal to support fascism, to praise dictators long dead and the armies they wielded, despite the havoc and death those forces wrought?

It is not illegal to hold such opinions, or espouse them. It is not illegal to be an advocate or apologist for many actions ascribed to Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. It is unlawful to promote racial hatred, as it should be, but it is not within the purview of any Canadian government, be it municipal, provincial or federal, to stem or stop speeches questioning the veracity of the Holocaust.

Granted, there usually is an undertone of anti-semitism in arguments constructed so as to minimize the Holocaust.

But it could also be contended that those who choose to challenge the commonly upheld scope of the Holocaust accept the prevailing view that it was abhorrent — that's why they so stoutly insist the alleged perpetrators could not have orchestrated such a calamity. This is a self-serving slant that flies in the face of the historical weight of evidence, however it should be countered by reason, not discrimination.

In the face of much protest, a speech by a man who questions the magnitude of the Holocaust was cancelled by a Milton restaurant owner recently.

A town councillor, Colin Best, said Monday night he didn't want such speeches made in the community.

We tend to agree. But councillor Best also said he would have attempted to prevent David Irving's speech had it been slated for a municipal hall rather than a privately owned restaurant.

This gives us pause, although we have no doubt that the majority of public opinion will fall behind Mr. Best.

Despite the anger Mr. Irving precipitates in organizations like the B'nai Brith, and despite the fact the provincial government monitors his actions closely when he visits Canada in a scarcely concealed attempt to eventually have him thrown out of the country, he has as yet broken no laws. Mr. Irving may be unwelcome, but he cannot lawfully be denied.

Free speech, within legally defined boundaries, cannot be made some sort of privilege. It must remain a universal right, or it is no longer a freedom at all.

What's next? What if so-called pro-lifers dominated municipal council? Would their opposite numbers, the pro-choice advocates, be denied access to Town-operated facilities? That would appear to be the case, if one supported the general thread of Mr. Best's argument.

Would it not be wiser to place our trust in ourselves, our consciences, our abilities to discern and evaluate the propositions of others?

Our hearts go out to the thriving and proud Canadian Jewish community so deeply offended by contentions that the Holocaust was more fallacy than fact.

But free speech, like all freedoms, demands vigilance. Freedom of speech cannot, must not, be compromised due to prevailing popular opinion. The law affords protection to all, not just those with whom we happen to agree.

PAGES OF THE PAST

One Year Ago

From the September 18, 1991 issue.

□ Despite the stifling hot and humid weather, more than 150 Miltonians continued the Terry Fox Marathon of Hope and raised \$7,000 for cancer research. There were several cyclists as well as joggers and walkers who took part in the 10 km trek at E.C. Drury School grounds. Pop and hotdogs were sold at the site as an added fundraiser. Organizer Joan Houle said she was happy with the participation and funds raised. She said a few participants collected more than \$600 in pledges individually.

□ In a main street parking lot, a motorist had left his German Sheppard in the car with the engine running. The energetic animal managed to put the gear shift into reverse smashing the vehicle into another parked car causing \$2,000 in damage. The dog then put the gear shift into drive and smashed the car into a concrete wall.

□ Roughly 150 residents and dignitaries from the Halton Centennial Manor had turned out to take part in the ceremonial sod-turning that marked the end of the old Manor and the beginning of a new one. The \$20 million rebuilding campaign was to take 18 months. The new Manor was to be smaller than the old one, but according to its designers and supporters, less institutional.

20 Years Ago

From the September 20, 1972 issue

□ An estimated 2,000 people crowded Milton's reconstructed Main St. to officially open the new sur-

face. There was clear weather and balmy temperatures for the ceremonial ribbon cutting by Warden Jim Swanborough and Mayor Brian Best. There were many special features including a beer garden and musical entertainment provided by Helix, a local group, The Four Squares and Paul Burke.

□ Milton Tennis Club championships wound up with a father-son contest for the men's singles title between Carl Smith and his son Jeff. Carl was declared the victor after 6-3 and 7-5 sets.

□ The 119th annual Milton Fall Fair was to feature several new attractions. A new poultry building was under construction and a new presentation would be a musical ride by a group of riders and horses from Almar Stables in Oakville. At the fair there would be five girls competing for the title of Halton Dairy Princess and the winner would go to the next Year's Canadian National Exhibition Sweetheart of the Fairs Competition.

50 Years Ago

From the September 17, 1942 issue

□ Main Street, from Martin Street was being widened up to the bridge over the Sixteen-mile Creek.

□ Public school children were already back to reading, writing and arithmetic but the high school students still had a couple more days — until September 22.

□ The big attraction at the Georgetown Fair was the sensational horse race when Peterene, owned by Dr. C. H. Heslop of Milton won the 228 trot or pace. Several Miltonians were present to see the fast horse run and Peterene would no doubt be one of the outstanding entries at the Milton Fall Fair as well.

PUD

BY STEVE NEASE

