



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Focus on real issue

The controversy over a classified ad run by Halton Women's Place that encouraged lesbians to apply for a social worker's job is both tragic and comic.

The tragedy is that those who find a lesbian lifestyle morally offensive used the opportunity to beat up on that segment of the population in self-righteous indignation once they saw the ad.

The comedic aspect comes from the muddled thinking swirling out of politically correct governments. They encourage minority hiring quotas, then discourage people from asking if someone belongs to a minority that isn't readily discernible to the naked eye — like lesbians, for example.

Burlington regional councillor Doug Greenaway found out the hard way Monday that you can't ask about a person's sexual orientation when he lobbed a query at Halton Women's Place executives aimed at finding out how many lesbians there are on the organization's board of directors.

Mr. Greenaway was quickly told such a question was illegal.

The Halton Women's Place executives who came to the regional committee meeting never admitted doing anything legally wrong — all they kept repeating was that they'd made a dreadful error in judgement, and that it wouldn't happen again.

They were right. They did make a serious error in alienating their largest potential financial backers, the area Rotary clubs, because a lot of those members apparently don't like help wanted ads highlighting a preference for lesbian candidates.

Rose Lee, an Ontario Human Rights Commissioner, said there's nothing wrong with stipulating that lesbians should be encouraged to apply, since a goal of employment equity programs is to make certain minority members get the same jobs as everyone else.

In summary to this point: According to the government, 'alternative' sexual lifestyles make one a minority member, liable, obviously, to possible persecution. Homosexuality, therefore, should give a person a leg up in the job market. But woe betide the employer who asks in an interview if a candidate is a homosexual.

In summary part two: Most people would at least pay lip service to the premise that minorities endure prejudice. But any state-sponsored efforts to alleviate that prejudice through hiring quotas should stop short of including sexual orientations outside the mainstream.

In summary part three: Money talks. Threatened with a potential loss of Rotary Club funding to the tune of \$500,000, and a general public relations disaster, Halton Women's Place backed down and denounced its ad. Quickly.

This poses some hard questions. Are we right to be so repelled at the prospect of hiring someone with a different sexual lifestyle? If we decide we are right, should we move to strike non-traditional sexual orientation from the list of qualifying attributes that puts someone in a minority group?

If not, why is it wrong to try and determine if someone fits into such a category? Should the onus be on the job candidate to announce that she's a lesbian?

Should Halton Women's Place have bailed out of what appears to be a reasonably strong legal position so quickly?

The problem with all employment equity goals is that they are just watered-down hiring quotas. Let's call them what they are, get the debate out in the public, and make a decision as to whether we're going to have them or not. The Halton Women's Place debacle has, so far, only highlighted the confusion and anger that surrounds this topic, especially in a recession.

LOOKING BACK



Candy strippers were honoured at the annual Milton District Hospital auxiliary meeting when board chairman John Ostler presented pins to those with 75 or more hours of service. In February 1967 seven girls received the service pins and four of them were from left: Sherri Richardson, Nancy Ferrier, Jackie Caughill and Mollie Latham.

PAGES OF THE PAST

One Year Ago

From the November 27, 1991 issue

□ The local Salvation Army Christmas Bureau Fund had set a goal to raise \$20,000 to ensure every child a gift and each family enough food for a festive celebration. The money was to be raised through donations to the fund. Bonnie Coulter, owner of Orchids 'n Lace and Christmas Creations at Milton Mall had pledged to donate 10 per cent of sales during the week of Dec. 9-14 to the Salvation Army Fund. Local Salvation Army worker Betty Zelinsky had suggested that others might follow Ms Coulter's lead.

□ 300 seniors were expected to attend a free afternoon of food and entertainment at Bingo Country. The seniors were to be treated to a festive feast of turkey and entertainment provided by local schools. The day was being made possible through the combined efforts of the 32 charities that used Bingo Country to raise money for their organizations. They were to host the event and cover costs while owners Barbara and Tony Camilleri were to donate their labour.

□ Following a recount, Marion Howard had claimed a Ward 3 municipal council seat and Jean MacArthur, who had apparently won in the Nov. 12 election had lost. The recount gave Ms Howard an eight-vote margin. Originally, Ms MacArthur was thought to have won by four ballots. The error in the initial counting on election night came when a poll worker wrote the wrong number on a result sheet.

20 Years Ago

From the November 29, 1972 issue

□ Ontario's \$13,500,000 Maplehurst correctional centre for adult offenders was officially underway in Milton. Construction had begun at the former Clarke farm at the south-east intersection of highways 25 and

401. There were however no plans for the new facility to replace the 115-year-old Halton County Jail on Brown Street in Milton. The big push on the Maplehurst centre was to relieve the facilities in Guelph and to replace present facilities in Mimico.

□ A fairly new organization, Glen Eden Ski Club was to kick off the 1972-73 ski season by holding a film show at the chalet in the Glen Eden Ski Area. One of the films was to feature skiing in the Rockies. Among the plans for the season were Nancy Green and Alpine racing training programs and the selection of racing teams for the provincial competitions. There would also be ski tours, cross-country adult racing, jumping and other skiing activities.

□ The Grand Prize of \$1,000 was split five ways at the Lions Club annual \$10 dinner at Hornby Tower Golf Club. Roy Henry, George Presniak, Bob Beeny, Chris Schouten and Mr. MacDougall shared the prize money. Wrist watches were given to every fifth name drawn.

□ A game of broomball between the Milton Youth Council and Police Council ended in a tie but it left the spectators in stitches. The final score was 2-2, not counting the multitude of illegal and unbelievable goals that were "socred" during the fun-filled skirmish. After the game ended both teams headed to the MYC coffee house for coffee and donuts.

50 Years Ago

From the November 26, 1942 issue

□ New store hours in Milton were meeting a good reception by customers. It just meant shopping a little earlier.

□ As a result of a heavy fog, opposite-Clare Wilson's farm, a Milton Brick Truck collided with a car owned by Murray Sproat of Esquering. The car and truck were both badly smashed, however the occupants escaped injury.

PUD

BY STEVE NEASE

