



# COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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# Looking Back



Roy Robertson won the trap-shooting championship for the Halton Sportsman's Club in April 1965. He defeated Steve Keane and John Readhead in a special 25-bird race. Above are (from left to right) Mr. Readhead, Mr. Robertson, Club president Ken Lewis and Mr. Keane.

## Consider liability carefully

In a leaked memo written recently, Halton Regional Chair Peter Pomeroy laments the lack of liability insurance Halton Region carries as a shield for elected officials who face allegations of wrongdoing.

To an extent we sympathize with Mr. Pomeroy, who has fronted the financial burden that has been his lot since formal criminal charges were laid against him a year ago.

Mr. Pomeroy is out of pocket a substantial sum in order to mount his defence against an in-depth investigation by a team of anti-corruption police officers who invested a great deal of time and energy, it would appear, in addressing the matter. He is in effect one man with one wallet against a task force underwritten by the public purse.

The matter is less than clear-cut, however. Mr. Pomeroy, it seems, is of the opinion that the shield of a blanket regional liability policy would provide a legal life-raft, his understanding obviously being that once the matter is settled, and he is acquitted, all will be at peace.

However, how would such a policy work if the elected official in question was not acquitted? And how would it work fairly pending the appeal process? Would appeal costs be borne by the underwriter?

It seems that the only really practical application of such a policy would be in the area of liability for damages incurred, or allegedly incurred, due to municipal negligence of some sort.

While corporations as entities provide some legal shielding from such lawsuits (and all municipalities are corporations), an additional buffer seems practical, so as to stop what amount to nuisance parallel suits against mayors or town councillors when someone is, for example, seriously injured on municipal property.

But that is an entirely different matter from taking up the legal gauntlet when a politician is alleged to have committed criminal wrongdoing, and when those who level that accusing finger are police officers.

Granted, a clause in the policy could stipulate that should the accused official be found guilty he or she automatically becomes liable for all legal costs, but how practical is that?

Convicted criminals facing possible jail terms and fines aren't likely to be overly concerned with making restitution to an insurance firm.

The question of legal liability coverage is an intriguing one, a puzzling one and a complex one, if criminal proceedings are involved. Halton regional councillors have called for a report on the matter. When it is presented we trust this will be explored in depth, both in the name of fairness to the accused, and because, in the end we are talking about the public purse. Tax dollars will fund these premiums. The question that remains is whether that is a good, and fair, investment or not.

## Hope springs eternal

It was refreshing to read, elsewhere in today's issue, about local prison inmates who took up a collection for a small boy stricken by disease. That charitable donation would be noteworthy anywhere, and is especially so in a prison.

Many people don't have much sympathy for the lot of criminals. Fair enough. But that doesn't make a warm, human gesture originating with these people any less praiseworthy.

Even more praiseworthy is the effort shown by one former inmate, also documented elsewhere today, to raise himself up from being a prison "lifer" to a university graduate who gives motivational speeches. Hope springs eternal, as witnessed by fact.

## Pages of the Past

### One Year Ago

From the May 19, 1993 issue

□ The impending closure of the local Co-op store was averted through the cooperative efforts of about 100 area farmers and Co-op employees. The community committed about \$80,000 through the purchase of common shares and term investments to bring new life to Milton Town and Country Co-operative Inc. The general manager of the Co-op, Oscar Meier, said the company had been in financial difficulty since the early 1980s. He explained the store had become more of a garden centre. Originally the business bought and sold products for farmers from farmers.

□ According to regional police, crime was down in Milton. Compared to the first four months of the previous year, crime had dropped by 20 per cent, said Detective Sergeant Mike Kingston. Thefts under \$1,000, break-ins and shoplifting had declined most significantly. Det. Sgt. Kingston attributed the overall crime reduction to a combination of things — recent convictions, efficient use of police resources, public assistance, community involvement and police visibility.

□ Milton District Hospital's annual Hike for Health, which included about 500 participants, brought in about \$32,000 for the purchase of a treadmill by the Milton District Hospital Foundation. Runners ran a 10 km route starting at the hospital, while those preferring to walk departed on four to six km routes. Former Milton councillor Mary Long won a bicycle for raising the most money through pledges.

### 20 Years Ago

From the May 22, 1973 issue

□ Flash flooding — the likes of which had not been seen since Hurricane Hazel in 1954 — hit Milton and district, leaving a costly trail of damage in its wake.

Unofficial estimates of the destruction reached about \$100,000. Torrential rain for about two and a half hours dumped an estimated four inches of rain on the area. The ground was already wet and the streams running high from other recent rainfalls, so the sudden extra deluge could not be soaked away quickly. Instead, it filled and overflowed streams, washed out roads and flooded basements in many homes near the creeks.

□ Mayor Anne MacArthur did the trowel work for the cornerstone ceremony for the new library. Behind the cornerstone was placed a copy of The Champion, a set of mint coins and a picture of the old Bruce St. School, which had stood where the new library was going up. Regional Chairman Allan Masson and Library Board Chairman Bob MacKay gave short addresses and Rev. Murray of the Knox Church gave a prayer of dedication.

□ Weekly garbage pick-ups was something Milton residents would soon have to accept. Milton Council agreed it was a way to reduce the cost of collecting and transporting garbage. Currently, Milton had two pick-ups per week. It was noted, however, that both Oakville and Burlington had gone to one pick-up per week. Some municipalities had two pick-ups per week during the hot summer months and fell back to one during the rest of the year.

### 50 Years Ago

From the May 18, 1944 issue

□ A Re-make Fashion Review, under the direction of Mrs. H.M. Aitken, was held at the Town Hall. The many attractive costumes that were modelled showed the possibility of what could be done with used clothing.

□ Sgt. J.A. Collis, of Milton, but stationed overseas, was awarded the first clasp to the Canadian Efficiency Medal. About a year earlier, he had been presented with the Canadian Efficiency Medal.

□ The music of the Lorne Scots Band and the songs of Isabel Johnson were featured at the Princess Theatre.

## Pud

by Steve Nease

