



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Looking Back



Beatkeeper Rick Figg of the Milton band The Wilderness gets that pounding rhythm from fellow band members bass guitarist Rick O'Hara, lead guitarist Allan Nixon and rhythm guitarist Ken O'Hara in December, 1967.

Where will this end?

Can you afford to pay more taxes?

Do you think you should have to pay more taxes?

Today's deficit is tomorrow's tax.

There are only two ways to deal with debt. You raise taxes or you lower expenses. The revenue generated by either or both of these measures is used to pay down loans, for that of course is what provincial debt is — money we have borrowed from someone else.

During the last provincial election people in Ontario decided they liked Mike Harris' plan to curtail our borrowing and begin paying back the staggering debts we have accumulated provincially over the last decade.

Mike Harris is Premier Harris now, and he's following through on his pledge to slash government expenditures. He also says, by the way, that he'll follow through on his promised tax cuts, which the Tories see as the right way to stimulate the economy and create jobs.

In the meantime, though, there is going to be substantial dislocation in the public sector, and we're seeing that now.

As of today the entire unionized provincial public service will likely be on strike. Many of those people are scared and angry. They have every right to feel that way. A great many of them are going to lose their jobs in the coming months.

That is what happened in the private sector across Ontario, and that is what will happen in the public sector. There is simply no way around it given the current economic imperatives.

And, truth be told, it is difficult to find sympathy for the public sector workers among their private enterprise counterparts. The latter have lived with a brutal so-called 'restructuring' for years. The former enjoyed far more security, and coped largely only with the overblown flap surrounding former Premier Bob Rae's timid foray into austerity.

That time is over now.

Even the unions which will be dramatically and adversely affected by provincial cutbacks say publicly there is a real need to rein in expenditures, an acknowledgement that would have been unheard of half a decade ago. Everybody knows we cannot sustain the current dangerous pace of debt accumulation. And if everyone agrees on that then they must also agree, it stands to reason, that postponing the affiliated difficult decisions only makes the situation worse.

Really, when you look at the positions of the provincial government and its employee union at present, the arguments are mostly about how to cope with the imminent massive layoffs, not about how the remaining unionized employees will be treated.

Likely, after a short period of give and take, an arrangement will be struck, once the union sees that it has gotten all it will get for people who will soon be ex-members. That sounds brutal, perhaps, but that is the painful patina of politics, provincial and union, in the 1990s.

Ultimately, we can only hope that, as public expenses are cut and disposable income rises, so will new opportunities evolve for the displaced.

In the meantime we have the current lamentable situation — widespread misery inflicted on so many due to irresponsible spending by us all. And we have a disquieting, uneasy sense of the future. For where will this all end? What will be our new economic equilibrium? How long will we bicker over less because we have taken more, without paying for it?

— Rob Kelly

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the March 1, 1995 issue

- Milton Chamber of Commerce president Michael Bourgon helped perform the traditional ribbon cutting ceremony following the official opening of the revamped tourist centre at Steeles Avenue and Martin Street.

- Church congregations from several denominations gathered to celebrate World Day of Prayer. Grace Anglican Church hosted the service. The gathering promoted Christian unity.

- Former Milton regional councillor Brad Clements was putting his efforts into the Milton United Way following his appointment as 1995 campaign chair.

20 Years Ago

From the March 3, 1976 issue

- Milton Fire Chief A. E. Clement accepted the keys to a new fire department utility van from Acting Mayor Hazel Porter, who represented the Town of Milton.

- The Halton Board of Education announced that Gwen Jeffares was to retire in the summer after serving for 18

years as principal of Sunshine School for the Trainable Retarded in Hornby.

- Staff at The Canadian Champion won five plaques in the 1975 Ontario Better Newspapers Competition. The Champion won "best all-round" in its circulation class plus best front page, best sports page, best editorial page and best composition and layout awards.

50 Years Ago

From the February 28, 1946 issue

- The February meeting of the Hornby W. I. was held at the home of Mrs. J. McCarron under the convenorship of citizen-in-charge, Mrs. Percy Merry.

- The first meeting of the newly-organized Milton Junior Farmer Group was held at the home of Margaret and Bob Ford. Between 40 and 50 young people were in attendance.

- The second debate in the Halton Junior Farmers Debating Series brought together Milton and Palermo Juniors at Milton High School. The subject under debate was "Resolved That All Public Schools in Each Township Should Be Placed Under a Single Board of Trustees." The winners of the debate were to meet the Acton club.

Pud

by Steve Nease

