

COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Looking Back



Local girls were rapidly joining softball leagues in July 1964 when Sharon Rommelaire, Cathie Hood and Jackie Stuart (of the Flora Shoppe team) posed for this picture during a break in their game. "Girls' softball activity has been thriving in the community and, as well as town teams, the Milton Girls' Softball Association sponsors two teams that compete in out-of-town play," reported The Champion.

Sharing the pain

Public employees and teachers are feeling the uncertainty of potential job reductions. Their unions have a wonderful opportunity to use experiences of cutbacks in private industry to modify their approach to the transition imposed by lower government spending.

Unions should seize the opportunity and propose wage and benefit rollbacks that would allow more of their members to keep their jobs. By proposing the rollbacks, which are inevitable, the unions would gain public sympathy and be more able to manage the specifics of change.

However, the unions are not doing that and are walking the same line of years past. The public, which has suffered from huge changes in the economy, isn't sympathetic with the union approach.

Private business has been dealing with economic change since 1990. Government has avoided inevitable change by simply borrowing more money or raising taxes. No one wants to see people lose their jobs. But now it's time to face the crunch and get on with life. There's no more money. It's too bad so many people have to suffer because governments were too weak or ill-managed to bring changes on slowly. Employees of private companies suffered as well when their employers were caught unaware of major change.

The former NDP government tried to soften the blow of cutbacks by slicing spending with social contract provisions and Rae Days. Former NDP cabinet minister Alan Pilkey said during last spring's election campaign that the NDP strategy to control debt was a method that spread the pain around. It was a good, but limited approach. People might be faced with Rae Days, he said, but at least they still have jobs.

Of course the NDP were still pushing through huge deficits. Their hearts were in the right place even if their brains were taking a holiday. It's hard to think of Mr. Rae as a bright man when his thinking was so muddled.

Now, the Harris Tories are looking at the whole picture and are determined to end borrowing. They've decided a slow approach won't work and have opted for decisive cuts to try to stop the debt spiral.

Their cutbacks in spending now force the issue of how to reduce staff. Under union contracts, layoffs are determined according to seniority. Across-the-board reductions in salary would allow the government to keep many more employees. We suggest higher cutbacks at the top salary levels and lesser reductions near the bottom.

However, unions rarely find the wherewithal to accept this solution because senior workers, who represent the most votes, won't accept less money to subsidize their lesser paid colleagues and they know they won't lose their jobs in a layoff.

If the Halton Board of Education's grandstanding in announcing 1,500 layoffs serves to scare employees into making across-the-board concessions then something will have been accomplished.

OPSEU is complaining of heavy handedness by government, but they haven't proposed the across-the-board salary reduction. OPSEU and various teacher unions wave the flag of every private industry perk ever written about and parade them around as if everyone in private industry is receiving every perk offered by every company.

Most workers in private industry receive no perks. They simply operate under the Employment Standards Act. If OPSEU or the teachers' unions want to accomplish the most for their members, they should propose wage and benefit cutbacks across the board in order to preserve jobs. Employees will be better off, the public will be better served and Ontario will be a better place.

— Brad Reaume

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the March 29, 1995 issue

- As part of Nutrition Month, local "chefs" had their favorite recipes analyzed for nutritional content. E.C. Drury assistant chef Gary Heaney, Anne Ptolemy, chairperson of the local Multi-Service Agency Advisory Committee, and Halton North MPP Noel Dunigan all took part.

- Milton Mall unveiled its new mascot 'Dat' following a magic show that wrapped up the mall's March Break activities. Alex McCutcheon presented Dat with a new pair of sneakers.

- Rev. David Mainse of television's 100 Huntley Street was in town. He spoke to a men's fellowship at New Life Pentecostal Church. His address was entitled, "Back to Basics: Getting Your House in Order."

20 Years Ago

From the March 31, 1976 issue

- A trip to Jamaica was donated to the Milton District Hospital Auxiliary compliments of Wally Crouter Travel and Wardair. The trip for two was to be drawn at the auxiliary's annual Maytime Ball at the Galaxy Club in Oakville.
- Many antiques were on display at Old is Beautiful, a

new shop in the basement of the Campbellville Opera Emporium. Proprietor Phyl Moore and store owner Anna Spencer were surrounded by refinished furniture and small antiques collected over the years.

- The Sunshine School was presented with the Presidential Award of Honor from the Rotary Club in appreciation of its service as the official 1976 Easter Seals helpers.

50 Years Ago

From the March 28, 1946 issue

- First and present presidents and secretaries of the Milton Home and School Association shared the honor in cutting the birthday cake at the organization's 25th anniversary. Mrs. Gowland, first president, Mrs. Anderson, present secretary, Mrs. McGrogan, president, and Mrs. F. Dewar, first secretary, were all present.

- The Knox Church Choir presented the Spring Musical in the Sunday School Room with a good audience, which responded in an appreciative manner.

- The Milton District Junior Institute met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Richardson of Lowville. The meeting was largely attended and there was a splendid role call. The subject of the meeting was manners, in which many took part.

Pud

by Steve Nease

