



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Box 248, 191 Main St. E.,
Milton, Ont. L9T 4N9

(905) 878-2341

Fax: 878-4943

Classified: 875-3300

Ian Oliver *Publisher*
Neil Oliver *Associate Publisher*
Rob Kelly *Editor*
Karen Huisman *Circulation Manager*
Teri Casas *Office Manager*
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Looking Back



Barbecued chicken was the main course at an Order of the Eastern Star fundraising dinner in June, 1963. Here, Barbara Aston of Toronto finishes off what started as a large-sized chicken leg. Barbara was one of 450 guests at the dinner held at the Milton Fair Grounds.

On self reliance and compassion

Thousands of people turned out for the Canada Day celebrations orchestrated locally by service clubs and the municipal government. As is usually the case here the day was fun, relaxed, enjoyable.

Yet it was a sign of things to come that both the Rotary and Optimist clubs stepped in to help run the event, as municipal government began to distance itself from the festivities.

Rumour has it that the municipality will cut back yet more on financing Milton's version of the national birthday party, in a cost-cutting move. This is not entirely a bad thing, since many of us have long been complaining about how much money government spends.

Now government appears more focussed on its core services, and, well, if you want to have a big party, you're probably going to have to organize and pay for it yourself.

So far this hasn't presented an insurmountable challenge. The service clubs staged a fine event Monday at Rotary Park, complete with a few modest pavilions representing various provinces, stage acts, amusements for younger kids and an outdoor libation lounge for older folks.

Many are worried that a kinder, gentler Canada is crumbling into suspicious strata, the haves against the have-nots. There is probably some truth in that, but hopefully it is a transitional event, as Canadians wean themselves away from massive government overspending at all levels and revert to self-reliance.

Our service clubs, made up of volunteers, have shown themselves fully capable of turning a profit on their Canada Day party. That profit generally goes into helping out the less fortunate in one way or another.

How well this effort is sustained will depend on all of us and the decisions we make, to volunteer our time, to support our service clubs, to realize that in so doing we can assist the less fortunate without depending on government so much for that task.

In cutting our government spending, in facing the fact that we must get our national finances in order, we cannot, must not, lose our social conscience.

We can and must demand accountability for the money we offer to the less fortunate. We can and must demand that the less fortunate do all they are capable of to help themselves.

But the wellspring of generosity that underpins this nation must not vanish into mean-spirited parsimony because of accumulated national debt.

In the long run, if we stay the course, we can deal with the debt and still extend a helping hand to those who need it. We can do it through our houses or worship, through our service clubs and community organizations, by volunteering our time if money is short.

That is what we used to do more of before we sloughed the burden off to government. Now, necessity dictates that we take part of that burden back.

In a time of many tests for Canada, this is yet one more. So often in the past the nation has risen to similar profound challenges. We can perhaps take comfort in the view that compassion has been and remains a hallmark of the national character, no matter what the surrounding tests

Rob Kelly

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the July 5, 1995 issue

- Heroic beagle Topnotch stayed by his fallen 75-year-old master James Thompson for five days. His barking alerted searchers to his location. Mr. Thompson, who suffered from Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, was found in dense bush about 500 metres south of his Moffat home. He had gone for a walk and didn't return. The five-day hunt for Mr. Thompson included helicopter searches, tracking dogs and organized police sweeps.

- The Ontario government announced it was pulling the plug on all non-profit housing projects including the controversial Sib-Jel development near the Milton Fair Grounds. Councillor Wally Hunter, who had led the fight against the development, was pleased with the provincial decision. More than 200 area residents stood against the development citing density, accessibility, noise and financial waste.

20 Year Ago

From the July 7, 1976 issue

- Dr. George Syer, who practiced medicine in Milton for 46 years, suffered a heart attack and died suddenly in his Milton home. Originally a partner of Dr. McColl, who died 40 years earlier, Dr. Syer moved his practise from Main Street to his large James Street home in 1937. Despite his 78 years, Dr. Syer continued his practise of medicine until his death. He was chief physician when Milton District Hospital opened its doors in 1959.

- Ford Motor Company announced a \$60 million expansion expected to bring 400 more jobs to the area. The company was to build Econoline Vans and Club Wagons in a 135,000-square-foot extension to the existing plant. Almost 300 north Halton residents were among the 5,400 employed at the plant when the announcement was made. The plant opened in 1953.

- Town council hoped for a provincial lottery grant to help finance a second ice pad at Memorial Arena on Thompson Road. Other anticipated grants reduced the cost to the Town for the \$350,000 project to about \$41,000. Funding details threatened to scuttle the project.

50 Years Ago

From the July 4, 1946 issue

- Debate raged on the design of a national flag. A parliamentary committee had reduced design ideas to two — a red flag with a gold maple leaf and a flag with red and white triangles with a green maple leaf on the diagonal line separating the colours. However, neither would be adopted and the flag issue would rage on an off for almost another 20 years.

- An editorial position was critical of high taxes and a federal government deficit of \$260 million especially in light of members of parliament granting themselves a tax free \$2,000.

- A welcome home committee for returning service personnel were formulating plans for a civic reception slated for August 5. Plans call for a parade, presentations, floats, band selections, sports and fireworks. Citizens were asked to decorate their homes with flags and streamers.

Pud

by Steve Nease

