



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Report does no favours for battered women

Recommendations in a recent report mean a step backward in helping battered women seek refuge and ultimately achieve freedom from their abusers.

The report commissioned for the Harris government suggests abused women should leave shelters within two days and solicit help from neighbours in protecting themselves. It also tells women they should consider not filing criminal charges against their spouses.

We agree with Theresa Greer's comments reported elsewhere in this newspaper that the idea of decriminalizing wife assault is "absolutely ridiculous."

Ms Greer, the executive director of Halton Women's Place, which operates two shelters for battered women and their children in Halton, is still fighting to convince society as a whole that wife assault is a crime. Assault of any kind is an illegal act under the Criminal Code of Canada and government and police have taken measures in recent years to ensure domestic situations are treated accordingly.

A law enacted several years ago allowing police to charge suspected abusers without the consent of their scared victims, and special training for police officers in dealing with domestic disputes are examples.

So why take a step backward?

Women should seek criminal charges not only because they have been victims of degrading and illegal acts, but also because the perpetrators should be held responsible for their actions.

It's known that most men who assault their partners don't stop their abusive ways without at least receiving help through counselling, so where would their accountability lie? We suggest nowhere — and their violent tendencies would be more likely to continue. Women at the end of their rope go to shelters because they have no other immediate refuge. Neighbours may help, but many, considering domestic abuse a private matter, turn a blind eye.

We agree with Ms Greer that restraining orders, which the report suggests victims should seek and then return home, are not always worth the paper they are written on.

She points out that women often cannot afford to run the households they have been forced from and are staying in shelters longer because of welfare cuts as well as a lack of affordable housing.

Requiring women — especially with children — to vacate shelters in two days could simply leave them with nowhere to go. Such a move could send some victims back to their abusive situations.

And considering that alarming statistics indicate one woman is killed by her partner or former partner every three weeks in Ontario, the results could be deadly.

We hope politicians will listen and carefully consider the warnings of Ms Greer, not the suggestions of the report writer, who doesn't appear to have a true understanding of the tragic and complicated issue of spousal assault.

—Karen Smith

1996 ~ THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Top 10 Accomplishments of the Chrétien Government:

NEASE '96

Pages of the Past

One Year Ago

From the January 3, 1996 issue

• Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh denounced reports that the provincial government would renege on its promised tax cuts. "The tax cut will be instituted in the way it was laid out in the Common Sense Revolution," said Mr. Chudleigh. Press accounts, Mr. Chudleigh explained, indicated that the rich would receive a bigger tax break than lower income Ontarians. According to the local Tory, though, the percentages would be the same.

• Georgetown District High School teacher Kirk Brush died tragically when his northbound Ford Aspire struck the end of a concrete bridge on Fifth Line. Mr. Brush, who attended Milton District High School, was the computer site coordinator at Georgetown high school.

• The sentencing of a retired priest, Father James Bernard Scoles, was postponed while a Crown attorney attained records pertinent to the case. The former Holy Rosary priest pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting one teenage boy in Milton and three others in Brantford between 1971 and 1984.

20 Years Ago

From the January 5, 1977 issue

• An estimated 300 people crowded in front of Town Hall on Main Street for the annual New Year's Eve bell

ringing ceremony. As the hour approached, partiers gathered in a circle in the street and sang Auld Lang Syne. Mayor-elect Don Gordon did the honours by ringing the bell as the new year came in. The tradition began in 1967 when Canadian Champion publisher Jim Dills felt something should be done to ring in the centennial year. Mr. Dills climbed up the bell tower and rang the bell 100 times, beginning a tradition for Miltonians.

• Mayor-elect Don Gordon outlined the priorities he'd like to see town council tackle in the new year. Among them were the strengthening of Milton's opposition to the Site F landfill and the re-routing of gravel trucks around (not through) Campbellville. Mr. Gordon was to be sworn in as mayor during the first council meeting of 1977.

50 Years Ago

From the December 31, 1946 issue

• A plan was approved by Milton Council that would bring about the town's first garbage collection. Garbage, refuse, ashes, etc. were to be collected every Monday and Thursday. James William Mowat was hired to collect the town's garbage for \$1,700 a year.

• Dr. C.H. Heslop retired from municipal affairs. Mr. Heslop spent a year as councillor and six years as reeve.

• After almost nine years, Rev. John Riddell left Milton's Knox Presbyterian Church. A special service was held at the church to say goodbye. Many attended the farewell service, even parishioners from other Milton churches.

Pud

by Steve Nease

